The Book of Ezekiel and Mesopotamian City Laments

Petter, Donna Lee

Abstract: This study is a comparison of the book of Ezekiel with the well-known city lament genre of ancient Mesopotamia. Nine shared features are analyzed and explained. These features derive from the work of F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp and his comparison of biblical Lamentations with city laments of Mesopotamia. This material provides a fruitful point of comparison, one that is more than coincidental given Ezekiel's geographical location in Nippur (the provenience of one of the five historical city laments). Compelling comparative evidence reveals that the lament genre is reflected in the book of Ezekiel and was used as a matrix for its compilation. Ezekiel's usage of the city lament genre is, perhaps, the key to understanding the organizational structure of much of the book along with its various themes.

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and Mesopotamian City Laments

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Donna Lee Petter

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PREFACE

The present monograph is a slightly modified version of my doctoral dissertation originally submitted to the faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Toronto (2009).

I would like to express my gratitude to the people who have contributed to this research and who have helped me see it published. First, I am thankful for my wonderful years of study at the University of Toronto, but especially to my original supervisor, Brian Peckham, who died shortly before the completion of this project. He was a constant source of encouragement about my ideas. His contribution cannot be measured by typical standards of being a great proof reader or insightful and careful about details. Although he was all of these things and more, his contribution lay with the immeasurable ability to motivate, inspire, and develop confidence in his students, the mark of a great teacher. Simply put, without him this work would not have been possible.

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Finally, I wish to thank Christoph Uehlinger for accepting this volume into the distinguished *OBO* series.

A few mentors and family members deserve praise as well. I think it is safe to say that the training I received with Ron and Judy Smith in the School of Biblical Studies in Hawaii provided unparalled preparation for this endeavor. The principles I learned while working with them shaped me and continues to affect everything I do. I would like to note also, in particular,

my sister Mary Jo. I could never repay her for her unwavering and loyal commitment exhibited to me over the years.

Words cannot express the sentiments for my husband Tom who, apart from sharing 23 fruitful years together, labored side by side with me for eight of those years pursuing the same high calling. At key junctures in my academic journey he decreased so that I could increase, and at great personal cost. When our son Marcus was born in 2000, he sacrificed his own research time in order to serve and support the needs of our new family. In our joint teaching appointments he tirelessly (well almost) taught more than his share of classes so that I could "finish." In spite of all of this he still finished first! There has been great joy in our journey together. Indeed, love endures and perseveres in all things.

Donna Petter
Fall 2010
South Hamilton, Massachusetts

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages*
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANEP	*Ancient Near Eastern Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*
ASJ	*Acta Sumerologica*
ASTI	Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute
ATD	Alte Testament deutsch
AuOr	*Aula orientalis*
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon Of the Old Testament*
BETL	*Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium*
BHS	*Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BiOr	*Bibliotheca orientalis*
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BJS	Biblical and Judaic Studies
BZAW	Beihefte zur ZAW
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester
CA	Curse of Agade
CAD	*Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CCSOT	Communicator's Commentary Series of the Old Testament
CLAM	Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia
ConBot	Coniectanea Biblia Old Testament
CTA	*Corpus des tablettes en cuneiforms alphabétiques*.
EL	Eridu Lament
ErIsr	*Eretz Israel*
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HALAT	*Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching

ICC	International Critical Commentary
Impv	Imperative
ISBE	*International Standard Bible Encylopedia*
ITC	International Theological Commentary
IOS	*Israel Oriental Society*
JANES	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBLMS	Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHNES	*Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	JSOT Supplements
KB	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSUr	Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur
LU	Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur
LXX	Septuagint
MCL	Mesopotamian City Lament
ms(s).	manuscripts(s)
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NL	Nippur Lament
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
OAJ	Oracles Against Judah
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTE	Old Testament Essays
OTL	Old Testament Library
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie*
SANE	Sources from the Ancient Near East
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of Theology*
Syr.	Syriac
Targ.	Targum
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
THAT	*Theologishes Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*
ThR	*Theologische Rundschau*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
UL	Uruk Lament
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*

VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum Supplements*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

INTRODUCTION

In her recent work, M. Odell has noted the inadequacies of the prophetic book genre classification for Ezekiel.[1] With respect to the vision of restoration in Ezekiel 40–48, for example, she observes that "prophetic motifs are minimal," and that the present classification does not tell us how the collection works.[2] Odell, likewise, asserts that the category does not help in understanding the persona of Ezekiel in 24:15–24, nor does it mirror other prophetic books.[3] In an attempt to solve the genre problem, one that defies prophetic literature expectations, Odell offers a creative solution. She suggests that the outline of Ezekiel resembles Assyrian building inscriptions, especially Esarhaddon's Babylonian inscriptions (c. 680 B.C.).[4] These monumental inscriptions detail the fate of a single city (its destruc-

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[1] Margaret Odell, "Genre and Persona in Ezekiel 24:15–24," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (eds. Margaret Odell and John T. Strong; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 195–219. See also Margaret Odell, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Ezekiel* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 4–5. Most people commenting and writing on Ezekiel usually start from the premise that, in terms of genre, Ezekiel represents prophetic literature. This is in large part due to Gunkel's contribution and his initial proposal that prophetic genres ("forms") should be analyzed and isolated for study as literary phenomena, since as speakers and writers the prophets had a distinctive way of communicating. Hermann Gunkel, "Nahum 1," *ZAW* 13 (1893): 223–244. The four leading commentaries on Ezekiel in the past twenty years were written with this assumption: Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (WBC 28; Dallas: Word, 1994), and *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Waco: Word, 1990); Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* (2 vols.; NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997–98); Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20* (AB 22; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), and *Ezekiel 21–37* (AB 22A; Garden City; Doubleday, 1997); Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (2 vols.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia; Fortress, 1979, 1983). Likewise, Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (*JSOTSup* 78; Sheffield: Almond, 1989) declares that Ezekiel is the first truly designed prophetic book. The contribution of her work for this study will be noted below. See also Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39: With an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 16–18 for more discussion on genre classification of the "prophetic book." However, within this working assumption, scholars have been quick to realize something unique about the nature of this book. To cite just one example, D. Block states that "While Ezekiel's prophecies share numerous features with other prophetic books, this collection is distinctive in many respects." Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 23. What all these have in common is the acknowledgment that to Ezekiel belongs a literary distinctiveness, the prophetic classification notwithstanding. Scholars have long observed that there seems to be a deliberate design imposed on the book. Admittedly, the consensus reveals that Ezekiel is not the typical prophetic book. As a result, one might query if Ezekiel is to be understood as more than just a collection of independent literary units of prophetic sayings and visions chronologically ordered by a careful editor. Could Ezekiel's distinctiveness be pointing to the possibility that the label "prophetic vision" or "prophetic literature" inadequately represents the totality of Ezekiel's written record?

[2] Odell, "Genre and Persona," 195–219.

[3] Ibid., 197–198.

[4] Odell, *Ezekiel*, 4.

tion to abandonment and its subsequent restoration). Ezekiel does this with Jerusalem. Due to a striking number of features shared between the two genres, Odell proposes that the inscriptions may have been a "literary model for the book of Ezekiel."[5] The genre study by A. Fowler provides a rationale for her argument.[6] In terms of genre development in general, he notes two stages. The first stage concerns the genre's natural organic development. Each use of the genre thereafter is dependent upon past uses. The second stage imitates the original by keeping all the main elements yet with adaptations and variations of its features. On the basis of the second development, Odell argues that Ezekiel took a public genre style and developed it into a "private, literary mode."[7] Ezekiel's cultural and historical context would allow for such literary contact.[8] Even though she challenges the traditional genre designation on sufficient grounds, she makes this qualifying remark, "though the general outline of Ezekiel resembles Esarhaddon's inscription, its individual units remain, for the most part, immersed in Judean prophetic and priestly tradition."[9]

On the one hand, Odell joins the rank and file of those who have not only noticed Ezekiel's distinctiveness, but who have also observed Mesopotamian influences throughout the text. In this respect, the work of D. Bodi is especially noteworthy because it provides a helpful survey reflecting the philological, iconographic, and thematic parallels from Mesopotamia in the book of Ezekiel.[10] With respect to the range of the comparisons that have been made between Ezekiel and Mesopotamian literature, the focus is generally not on the whole book, only select texts or blocks of material in Ezekiel. For example, chapters 8–11 are discussed in relationship to the theme of divine abandonment so common in the ancient Near East.[11] Popular mythological themes are reviewed in close connection to Gog and Magog (Ezek 38–39).[12] At times, an isolated chapter or verse

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[5] Odell, "Genre and Persona," 212. Consult the summary chart especially on 218–219 for a line up of the comparisons. See also 208–217.

[6] Odell, "Genre and Persona," 212. Cf. Alastair Fowler, "Life and Death of Literary Forms," *New Literary History* 2 (1971): 149–169.

[7] Odell, "Genre and Persona," 211. This explanation accounts for the obvious differences between the scroll of Ezekiel vs. compositions on monuments.

[8] Ibid. Odell appeals to the Assyrian domination in the west, and to the possibility that Assyrian literary models might have been appropriated even among the Babylonians as a venue for contact.

[9] Ibid., 214.

[10] Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (OBO 104; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 35–51. Bodi's list need not be improved upon. See also Daniel Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an Ancient Near Eastern Motif" in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (eds. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 32–33.

[11] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24,* 272–360.

[12] Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 424–493.

forms the basis for comparison (Ezekiel 1).[13] In most cases, this is in no small measure due to the understanding that Ezekiel underwent intense redactional activity, a view espoused especially by W. Zimmerli and others before him.[14] Although this diachronic approach is helpful, it can deter from a fruitful analysis of the literary whole.[15] Furthermore, the literary repertoire from the ancient Near East that has been compared with portions of Ezekiel covers a wide array of genres. At least nine different genres have been used. Some of these include historiographic poems, dream reports, victory songs, and poetic laments.[16] These genres, likewise, span the centuries. They reach back as early as Sumerian civilization, include Canaanite mythology, and extend down to the sixth century B.C.[17]

On the other hand, few scholars like Odell have broadened the base of comparison to encompass the entire plan of the book of Ezekiel. Again, the trend was to dissect the text and reconstruct a hypothetical history of its development. However, Greenberg's synchronic or holistic approach licensed Odell and others to move in this new direction.[18] Perhaps the nearest to this holistic comparative literature approach, apart from Odell, is D. Bodi's work on Ezekiel. He examines Ezekiel in light of the *Poem of Erra* and argues that the redactor of Ezekiel was familiar with the *Poem of Erra* on account of a formal parallelism contained within the narrative structure of both works.[19] He accounts for the similarities on the basis of

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[13] In the case of Ezekiel 1, it has been argued that the chapter was shaped by ancient Babylonian cosmology and astronomy, "it seems to us that astral and cosmological symbolism not only constitutes a major factor of coherence in Ez.1, but also the hidden motor of several redactional expansions and reinterpretations … since both authors and redactors of the book of Ezekiel were probably much influenced by literature and written or oral traditions as by actual visual images." Christoph Uehlinger and Susanne Müller Trufaut, "Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography: Attempts at Further Refinement": *Theologische Zeitschrift* 57 (2001; Alttestamentliche Forschung in der Schweiz. Festheft zum XVII. Kongress der International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament in Basel): 140–171.

[14] Gustav Hölscher, *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch, eine literarkritische Untersuchung* (BZAW 39; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1924). See also Charles C. Torrey and Shalom Spiegel, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930; repr., New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1970) xxxvii-xxxviii, 11–119.

[15] Those that debate Ezekiel's unity, authorship, redaction, and form still generally treat the book as a literary whole.

[16] See Daniel Block, *The Gods of the Nations* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

[17] A few samples will suffice to illustrate. Ezekiel 14 has been compared with Tablet XI of Gilgamesh, Ezekiel 23:20 with a Sumerian proverb, and Ezekiel 9 with the *Poem of Erra*.

[18] Susan Niditch, "Ezekiel 40–48 in Visionary Context," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 208–224; Gordon H. Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse* (SBLDS 126; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (*VTSup* 76; Leiden: Brill, 1999); J. Galambash, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (SBLDS 130; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

[19] Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 11–30. The poem's main thrust is the destruction and restoration of Babylon. It contains a long lament by the god Marduk on the destruction of his city.

"literary emulation" yet acknowledges other influences on the book.[20] D. Sharon compares Ezekiel 40–48 to a Sumerian temple hymn.[21] Although the study pertains specifically to chapters 40–48, it does, in fact, assume chapters 1–39 as vital for the comparison. She argues that the circumstances detailed in the first half of the book (the inevitability of Jerusalem's destruction and the death and scattering of its people) logically lead to restoration. This parallels the years of death and desolation in Sumer which also leads to its renewal.[22] The study of Ezekiel by B. Power argues that the book's literary shaping and essential structure indicates iconographic influence from the royal administration of the Babylonian court.[23] J. Kutsko's excellent study on the presence and absence of God in Ezekiel understands the structure of the book to revolve around the Jerusalem Temple and Yahweh's glory.[24] L. Boadt focuses on the mythological themes found in chapters 38–48 and their important role in the possible unity of the book.[25] M. Nobile states that the mythic patterns of Ezekiel 38–39 which consist of divine theophany, battle against chaos, and the establishment of a divine temple should be considered programmatic for the entire book.[26] M. Astour saw enough similarities between Ezekiel and the Naram Sin Legend to suggest that Ezekiel knew of it and readapted it for his purposes.[27]

Overall, this brief treatment of Ezekiel and Mesopotamian parallels alerts us to an obvious consensus among scholars. Regardless of a synchronic or diachronic approach to the text, scholars tend to recognize that the prophet probably possessed knowledge of other Mesopotamian literary works and adapted them for his purposes. He seems to have made great use of his Babylonian context in the literary shaping of his collection. Analysis of such extra-biblical literature helps us to understand either the parts or whole of Ezekiel better.[28]

Thus, Odell's solution and approach to understanding the genre of Ezekiel is in many ways groundbreaking. She dares to define the marked homogeneity found in the book with specifics. The Babylonian inscriptions

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[20] Ibid., 319–320.
[21] Diane M. Sharon, "A Biblical Parallel to a Sumerian Temple Hymn? Ezekiel 40–48 and Gudea," *JANES* 24 (1996): 99–109.
[22] Ibid., 99–100.
[23] Bruce A. Power, "Iconographic Windows to Ezekiel's World" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1999), 6.
[24] John Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Biblical and Judaic Studies vol. 7; Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2000), 1, 23.
[25] Lawrence Boadt, "Mythological Themes and the Unity of Ezekiel," in *Literary Structures and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (eds. L. J. de Regt, J. de Waard, and J. P. Fokkelman; Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1996), 211–231.
[26] M. Nobile, "Beziehung zwischen Ez 32, 17–32 und der Gott-Perikope (Ez 38–39) im Lichte der Endredaktion," *BETL* LXXIV (1996): 255–259.
[27] Michael Astour, "Ezekiel's Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthewan Legend of Naram Sin," *JBL* 95 (1976): 567–579.
[28] How he possessed knowledge of these literary works can only be surmised, of course.

of Esarhaddon are what give literary coherence and design to the book. Although one may disagree with the inscriptional genre selected for comparison with Ezekiel (admittedly, it is open to debate[29]) she forces a fresh evaluation. Odell revisits the genre classification of Ezekiel by an examination of the whole book, something also undertaken in this study. On account of her specific approach, Odell's work provided a necessary ally for my own emerging research relative to Ezekiel and genre.[30]

This study suggests another literary model from the ancient Near East that might account for Ezekiel's "genre," something more nuanced than prophetic literature (but does not exclude it), one that aligns itself with internal evidence, and is perhaps more inclusive of some of the book's diverse content.

The idea proposed here is as follows. I am arguing that the Mesopotamian city lament genre likely affected the composition of the book of Ezekiel. Things that have long since puzzled scholars, features which have been overlooked and misinterpreted (and redacted) such as a mute prophet, Ezekiel's multifaceted portrayal, the book's cohesion, the placement of the oracles against the nations, and the program of restoration, might make better sense when considering this genre of Mesopotamian literature, one that persisted until the second century AD.[31] By considering the city lament

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[29] See chapter three below.

[30] Odell first proposed her idea in the SBL Symposium on *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* in 2000. Her most recent commentary on Ezekiel fleshes out the idea more thoroughly.

[31] In this regard the work of Dobbs-Allsopp is crucial for the present investigation. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (BibOr 44; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993). Based on the genre analysis of Alastair Fowler, the author identifies nine generic features attributed to the Mesopotamian city lament genre. These features include: *subject and mood*, *structure and poetic techniques*, *divine abandonment*, *assignment of responsibility*, *agents of destruction*, *destruction*, *the weeping goddess*, *lamentation*, and *restoration.* He notes the usefulness of understanding city lament features in light of the funeral dirge. Due to a crossover of themes and motifs, the city lament might have been conceptualized in terms of the funeral lament. On the basis of these combined features, he then scrutinizes the book of Lamentations, some prophetic oracles, and a few Psalms. He concludes that Israel possessed a native lament genre, one independent from Mesopotamian influence. As such, he asserts that a generic relationship between the two cultures explains the similarities and connections, not literary borrowing. I, too, have appropriated Fowler's thesis about genre development which emphasizes the concept of family resemblance as an explanation for literary similarities among different cultures. Alastair Fowler, "Life and Death of Literary Forms," *New Literary History* 2 (1971); idem., *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genre and Modes* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1982). However, as pointed out elsewhere by Dobbs-Allsopp, Fowler's analogy does not address issues of origin, evolution, and the interrelations of genre. Following D. Fishelov, *Metaphors of Genre: The Role of Analogies in Genre Theory* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1993), 1–83, Dobbs-Allsopp draws on understandings of Darwinism characteristic of contemporary biology to address these issues with specific attention to the Israelite and Mesopotamian city laments. See Dobbs-Allsopp, "Darwinism, Genre Theory, and City laments" *JAOS* 120/4 (2000):

as a possible literary matrix, I am attempting to apprehend "the art and intelligent design in the present book of Ezekiel."[32] The book of Ezekiel might be viewed as a prophetic reuse of this ancient lament genre, albeit, in a modified form, one that would suit the purposes of the exilic community. Although this proposal involves an assumption about an external influence, this assumption is a fair one, as I have noted.[33] Besides, the assumption might not even be necessary given an important piece of internal evidence that should seriously be considered. The evidence provided by the scroll (Ezek 2:8–3:4) seems to be the initial influence behind the shape and design of the book.[34] Explanations such as literary borrowing or a generic relationship with the city lament genre are secondary. The scroll, instead, offers a primary rationale.

Thus, the present investigation consists of two parts. Part I considers external influences on Ezekiel by attempting to understand the city lament genre first in Mesopotamia, and then in Israel (chapters one and two). Part II seeks to understand the internal evidence of the book. To that end chapter three focuses on the scroll incident and its impact for Ezekiel's role in the book. Chapters four through six (Yahweh's anger and abandonment of Jerusalem, sin and judgment, and Ezekiel's program of restoration respectively) investigate the literary impact of the scroll on the book's shape and subject matter.

625–630. This study, therefore, recognizes the numerous ways in which genres mix in literary compositions based on the theories established in the works mentioned above. For more on Dobbs-Allsopp's views, see chapters one and two below.

[32] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 26.

[33] Though there is no consensus on the matter, it appears that the influence of the MCL on the book of Ezekiel was likely functioning at the level of the prophecy's origin rather than introduced only at the redactional level. See also Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 318 who suggests something similar with his comparison of the book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra.

[34] The research presented here is based on the study of Ezekiel in its final form. I have deliberately stayed away from the source-critical discussion of passages. While I do not deny the possibility of some editorial activity, entering the discussion does not suit the purposes of this study. The primary objective is not to offer a solution regarding authorship, but to demonstrate the relationship between Ezekiel the book and Mesopotamian literature. For a concise overview on this topic see Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (LHBOTS 482; London: T & T Clark, 2007), 7–16. Several other fine studies have more than adequately reviewed textual and redactional issues. See J. Garscha, *Studien zum Ezechielbuch: Eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung von Ez 1–39*. Europäische Hochschulschriften 23. Bern: Herbert Lang. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1974; K.-F. Pohlmann, *Ezechielstudien: Zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Buches und zur Frage nach den ältesten Texten*. BZAW 202 (1992). Berlin de Gruyter; Harold H. Rowley, "The Book of Ezekiel in Modern Study," *BJRL* 36 (1953): 146–190; Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 357–370; Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, "Ezekiel among the Critics," *Currents in Research* 2 (1994): 9–24; Henry McKeating, *Ezekiel* (Old Testament Guides; Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1993), 30–61.

CHAPTER ONE: CITY LAMENTS IN MESOPOTAMIA

INTRODUCTION

This chapter progresses with two principal purposes. First, I will describe in detail the features of the Mesopotamian city laments. To that end the various texts, their date of composition, language, content, general structure, authorship, and use will be briefly reviewed. Second, special attention will be given to understanding characteristic components of city laments.

In the body of Sumerian tablets and cylinders the genre known as lament literature can be further divided into congregational and individual laments.[35] Within the broad division of congregational or communal lamentations, the focus of the present discussion, there are six discernible subsections. One finds the Sumerian city laments proper or historical laments, the tambourine laments (or *eršemmas*), harp/drum songs (or *balags*), Akkadian city laments, Dumuzi laments, and laments for kings.[36] This discussion isolates the Sumerian city laments proper along with the *balags* and *eršemmas* because together they bear more similarities with the book of Ezekiel.[37]

THE TEXTS: HISTORICAL CITY LAMENTS

The only available Sumerian city laments[38] date from the Old Babylonian period (*ca*. 2000–1600 B.C.).[39] These are five relatively long lamentations

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[35] Admittedly, designating this literature as a "lament genre" has its difficulties. The label utilizes modern standards and places them on ancient documents that technically do not have a genre classification. Furthermore, the texts that we do possess are incomplete and, in some cases, badly preserved. For a fuller discussion on the difficulties of classifying Mesopotamian literature in general see Piotr Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 4–10. Michalowski takes a more cautious approach given the difficulty of genre labels when comparing the city laments to other literature. See also H. L. J. Vanstiphout, "Some Thoughts on Genre in Mesopotamian Literature," in *Keilschriftliche Literaturen: ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. Rencontre assyriologique internationale,* (eds. Karl Hecker and Walter Sommerfeld; Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient, Bd. 6; Berlin: D. Reimer, 1986), 1–11.

[36] William W. Hallo, "Lamentations and Prayers in Sumer and Akkad," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East,* (vol. 3; ed. Jack M. Sasson; New York: Scribners, 1995), 1873–1874.

[37] Collectively these will be designated throughout this study as city laments or Mesopotamian laments for the sake of convenience.

[38] The following abbreviations will be utilized for the Sumerian texts: LSUr: *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*; LU: *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*; EL: *The Eridu Lament*; UL: *The Uruk Lament*; and NL: *The Nippur Lament*. This study excludes the work of Jerrold S. Cooper, *The Curse of Agade* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1983), since this text is not formally considered a city lament. However, when mentioned the abbreviation will be CA.

which include: *The Lamentation over Sumer and Ur*,[40] *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*,[41] *The Eridu Lament*,[42] *The Uruk Lament*,[43] and *The Nippur Lament*.[44] It is generally agreed that the latest date of composition for these texts is *ca*. 1925 B.C.[45] Most scholars estimate that the laments were written within 50 years of the city's fall.[46] With respect to language, Green notes the variations of dialect found in the city laments.[47] For the most part the historical city laments utilize *emegir*, the main Sumerian dialect. However, *emesal*, another dialect, occurs in several passages and appears to have a special function in most of the laments.[48] The laments detail a specific historical event, the devastation of Ur and the major cities of the Ur III Dynasty at its collapse.[49] This historical event unfolds in a

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[39] For an historical overview of the Sumerian city laments see Thorkild Jacobsen, "Review of Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur by Samuel N. Kramer," *AJSL* 58 (1941): 219–224; Samuel N. Kramer, "The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the Mater Dolorosa," *BA* 46 (1983): 69–72; William W. Hallo, "Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions," in *Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East* (vol. 6; eds. Baruch Halpern and M. H. E. Weippert; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 224–225; See also Michalowski, *LSUr*, 1–3.

[40] Samuel N. Kramer, "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," (*ANET*, 611–619); Michalowski, *LSUr*, 11.

[41] Samuel N. Kramer, *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur* (Assyriological Studies 12; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940); Idem., "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur," (*ANET*, 455–463).

[42] M.W. Green, "The Eridu Lament," *JCS* 30 (1978): 127–167.

[43] M.W. Green, "The Uruk Lament," *JAOS* 104 (1984): 253–279.

[44] Samuel N. Kramer, "The Lamentation over the Destruction of Nippur," *ASJ* 13 (1991): 1–26. See also Steve Tinney, *The Nippur Lament: royal rhetoric and legitimation in the reign of Išme-Dagon of Isin 1953–1935 B.C.* (Philadelphia: Samuel Noel Kramer Fund, 1996). Consult also *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, The ETCSL Project (Faculty of Oriental Studies: University of Oxford, 2005) for electronic editions and translations of the city laments. See especially ETCSL sub corpus (2.2.2–2.2.6) for translations of the city lament corpus. Online: http://www.etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk.

[45] Mark E. Cohen, *The Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Potomac: Capital Decisions Limited, 1988), 9; W. C. Gwaltney, "The Biblical Book of Lamentations in the Context of Near Eastern Lament Literature," in *More Essays on the Comparative Method: Scripture in Context II* (eds. William W. Hallo, et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 191–211.

[46] Dietz O. Edzard, *Die Zweite Zwischenzeit Babyloniens* (Wiesbaden: O Harrassowitz, 1957), 57. Samuel N. Kramer, "The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the Mater Dolorosa," *BA* 46 (1983): 69–80. See also Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once . . . Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1987), 447.

[47] M. W. Green, "Eridu in Sumerian Literature," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1975), 288.

[48] For the special function of the dialect in the laments, see below. See Cohen, *CLAM*, 11, for a discussion on the *emesal* dialect. The LSUr, EL and UL were largely written in *emegir* while the NL and LU heavily utilize *emesal* (Hallo, "Lamentations," 1872).

[49] For full discussions on the topic consult R. McAdams, "Contexts of Civilizational Collapse: A Mesopotamian View," in *The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations*, (eds. Norman Yoffee and George L. Cowgill; Tucson: University of Arizona, 1988), 20–43;

simple plot movement contained in each lament.[50] The plot commences with divine abandonment, intensifies with invasion by means of the storm, and proceeds to various pleas for the gods to observe the destruction, and in some cases, ends with the hope of restoration.[51] It might equally be fair to state that this loose plot revolves around divine abandonment and divine presence. Simply put, the poems speak of death (due to divine abandonment) and the hope for an after life (due to the return of the divine presence).

With respect to structure, a tight discernible structure is not apparent but each lament does contain structural devices. The main signals include the *kirugu* and *gišgigal*.[52] Although scholars are uncertain as to the precise function of these labels, the *kirugu* is a designation that separates one *kirugu* from the ensuing ones and seems to indicate the conclusion of individual *kirugu* within the lament. One finds as few as four or as many as twelve *kirugus*.[53] The general rendering of this term is usually "song" or "antiphon," but it can also mean "to bow to the ground" or "genuflection" as suggested by Falkenstein.[54] The *gišgigal* might correspond to choral terminology since the translation "antiphony" is often assigned to it.[55]

Another, less obvious, structuring component is the contrasting thematic elements that seem to divide the laments. Since the poems speak of death and life, perhaps it is feasible to divide them, albeit artificially, into two thematic divisions. The largest division speaks of death while the smallest division speaks of the hope of life, a resurrection of sorts.[56] One can see how the use of such a contrast might function structurally in the bigger picture of the laments.[57]

Thorkild Jacobson, "The Reign of Ibbi-Suen," *JCS* 7 (1953): 36–47; William W. Hallo, "A Sumerian Amphictiony," *JCS* 14 (1960): 88–114. Douglas R. Frayne suggests that EL may be associated with the events connected to the restoration of Eridu during the reign of Nur-Adad (Douglas R. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period [2003–1595 BC]* [The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 4; Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1990], 144–146). NL likely connects to events that transpired during the reign of Išme-Dagan, see Douglas R. Frayne "New Light on the Reign of Išme-Dagān," *ZA* 88 (1998): 37–38.

[50] Gwaltney, "Biblical Book," 209.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Green, "Eridu," 283–286.

[53] LU contains eleven *kirugu*; LSUr contains five *kirugu*; NL contains twelve; UL contains seven preserved *kirugu* out of twelve; EL contains seven.

[54] Adam Falkenstein, "Sumerische Religiöse Texte," *ZA* 49 (1950): 80–150.

[55] Ibid.

[56] This would be true of laments dealing with Dumuzi who is a dying and resurrecting god. See Hallo, "Lamentations," 1873–1874.

[57] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 40.

Ritual Use of the Historical City Laments

Mesopotamian laments have a setting in the world of the *gala* priests. The laments contain *emesal* (a dialect peculiar to these priests)[58] as well as the *kirugu* structuring device (especially if rendering *kirugu* as "genuflection"). Because the genre is closely associated with temple rituals, most agree that their composition was for cultic purposes. It is not clear, however, as to what part of the liturgy they specifically belonged. Several scholars suggest that the priests composed these laments for ritual drama in cultic ceremonies at the razing of sanctuaries in preparation for their restoration.[59] The laments were intended to pacify the offended deity for yet another intrusion of his or her earthly residence. In this way, the royal rebuilder would be absolved of any responsibility for further damage to the shrine which was initially caused by foreign invaders.[60] Green, on the other hand, thinks the laments were composed to commemorate the completion of the restoration phase.[61] More specifically, she envisions that the laments were created for the installation ceremony at which point the king, performing in his priestly function, returned the image to the shrine.

When their liturgical use ended, the city laments ceased being written and were valued as literature. While they were adopted into the Neo-Sumerian canon and widely recopied by the scribal academy, this process appears to have occurred during a limited time only (*ca*. 1800–1700 B.C.). Thus, unlike other Sumerian texts, the city laments did not have a long textual history because they ceased to be copied beyond the Old Babylonian period.[62]

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[58] The *emesal* dialect appears in texts that primarily involve the goddess Inanna, and in lamentations. For more on the dialect see the study by M. K. Schretter, *Emesal-Studien. Sprach-und literaturgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur sogenannten Frauensprache des Sumerischen* (Beitrage zur Kulturwissenschaft 69; Innsbruck, 1990).

[59] Cohen, *CLAM*, 11; Jacobsen, "Review," 219–224; W.W. Hallo, "The Cultic Setting of Sumerian Poetry," *ARAI* (1970): 116–134. The evidence that leads scholars to the conclusion that the laments might have been used in ritual drama is due to the various speakers in the laments.

[60] Hallo, "Lamentations," 1872.

[61] Green, *Eridu*, 309. Since there is not a great deal of temporal difference between razing the temple and its rebuilding, Green's view has merit.

[62] Gwaltney, *Biblical Book*, 196; Raphael Kutscher, *Oh Angry Sea (a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha): The History of a Sumerian Congregational Lament* (Yale Near Eastern Researches 6; New Haven: Yale University, 1975), 6. See Appendix 1 for a sample *kirugu* from NL.

ERŠEMMAS (2ND AND 1ST MILLENNIUM B.C.)[63]

In contrast to the historical city laments, numerous *eršemmas* are attested. The term, *eršemma*, means "the wail of the tambourine" in Sumerian.[64] Cohen's catalog contains approximately 200 *eršemmas* deriving from the OB period and the first millennium.[65] Their longevity is attested by the fact that Old Babylonian *eršemmas* were copied in the first millennium and new ones were probably being composed.[66]

These compositions were written in *emesal* by the *gala* priests and are addressed to individual deities. In the OB period they consisted of a single literary unit but later in the first millennium there were as many as three structural units. Eventually, *eršemmas* were appended to the *balag* lamentations.[67] Through these compositions the lamentation singers' (*kalûtu*) purpose was precisely to appease the heart of the angry gods, and to explain its place within the general framework of Babylonian Theology.[68] Their main content or subject matter concerns three overlapping ideas: hymns of praise, wails over catastrophes and narratives based on mythological motifs. The catastrophes described in the *eršemmas* occur, so it seems, due to the deity's departure from their shrine. When, for example, Inanna, Dumuzi or Gestinannna (who are all astral deities) are trapped in the nether world and are absent, their respective cities are ravaged.[69] In this way, unlike the city laments proper, the *eršemmas* do not describe a specific historical event of destruction but maintain a more general lament tone.

BALAGS (2ND AND 1ST MILLENNIUM B.C.)[70]

These laments derive their name from the *balag* instrument, either a drum or harp that accompanied their recitation.[71] According to Cohen, just over

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[63] The *eršemmas* that will be cited are numbered following Mark E. Cohen, *Sumerian Hymnology: The Eršemma* (HUCAS 2; Cincinnati: Ktav Pub. House, 1981), 42–47. The abbreviation *SH* will be used to refer to Cohen's work.

[64] Hallo, "Lamentations," 1872.

[65] Cohen, *SH* and *CLAM*. On the issue of chronology for this period see Jack Sasson, "Hammurabi," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (vol. 3; ed. Jack M. Sasson; New York: Scribners, 1995), 403, 907.

[66] Hallo, "Lamentations," 1873. See Appendix 2 for a sample of the *eršemma*.

[67] See below.

[68] Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "Late Babylonian Intellectual Life," in *The Babylonian World* (ed. Gwendolyn Leick; London: Routledge, 2007), 473–486.

[69] *eršemma* 79, 32.

[70] The *balags* quoted throughout have been assigned numbers according to the order of their incipit in the NA catalogue 4R2 53 published by H. Rawlinson, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia* [2nd ed.; 5 vols.; London: British Museum, 1861–1909]; credit for this helpful organizational scheme goes to F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp (*Weep*, 164–166, Appendix I). See Cohen, *CLAM* for the incipit list, 1–6.

100 *balags* exist. They appear as early as 1900 B.C. (OBP) as a continuation of the historical city lament, with the latest redactions dating to the Seleucid period.[72] *Balags*, like *eršemmas* were written in *emesal* and address a specific deity. Their content is basically the lament over a major public disaster affecting the temple, city or entire land. The *balag* has a threefold structure. The first and largest section of the *balag* is devoted to praising the deity. The praise unfolds in two ways: praise is offered to the deity in acknowledgement of the deity's sovereignty and power, or through cajoling the god in hopes he/she might respond to the groans of the people.[73] Second they have a general narrative description of the destruction surfacing due to natural causes or foreign invaders. Included in the narrative sections are the responses of the goddesses. The third section concerns importunities whereby entreaties are offered to the deity in hopes of abating his/her wrath.[74] In time the *balags* became repetitive, utilizing stock phrases or stanzas that made them like litanies.[75]

Ritual use of Eršemmas and Balags

There is much overlap between the *eršemmas* and *balags* as it relates to their use in ritual.[76] As mentioned above, the *emesal* dialect of Sumerian was used for the *eršemma* and *balag* compositions, a dialect particular to the *gala* priests. *Emesal* ("thin" or "attenuated speech") was a fitting language for lamenting[77] since one could simulate high pitches of distress by using this dialect.[78] The *gala* priests who were specialists in reciting lamentations could create the proper emotion as a result.[79] Typically, these specialized cultic personnel would recite the laments, on behalf of the entire community, at the razing of sacred structures. The laments were part of the propitiatory rites, an attempt to soothe the divine anger that could possibly ensue from tampering with holy ground. However, their ritual function was not restricted just to the razing of sacred structures. Indeed, before the *balags* were formally joined to the *eršemmas* in the first millennium and afterwards, *balags* and *eršemmas* were used as fixed liturgy for festivals

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[71] M. E. Cohen, *Balag-compositions: Sumerian Lamentation Liturgies of the Second and First Millennium B.C.* (Malibu: Undena, 1974), 31–32.
[72] Cohen, *CLAM*, 6.
[73] Ibid., 7.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Hallo, "Lamentations," 1873. For a sample *balag* see Appendix 3.
[76] Likewise, an overlap exists between the city laments proper with the *eršemmas* and *balags* regarding ritual use.
[77] Hallo, *Lamentations and Prayers*, 1872, comments that the gala priests "may have been castrati singing in a kind of falsetto …." Also *emesal* was the dialect used by women.
[78] Green, "Eridu," 309.
[79] *Emesal* is also found in direct speech of women or goddesses throughout the laments.

and days of the month.[80] The *balags* were also used in *namburbi* rituals which were performed as ritual drama to avert portended evil.[81] Thus the broad ritual use of both the *eršemmas* and *balags* reflects the importance of the lamentation tradition. Indeed, it was a means by which the cultic personnel could maintain a constant vigil against the anger of the deity on behalf of the whole community.[82]

STANDARD FEATURES OF THE TEXTS

Just as there is a general overlap with ritual function among the historical city laments, *eršemmas*, and *balags*, so too, there is overlap as it relates to consistent and apparent features found in the city laments under discussion.[83] More than any other, it was the work of Margaret Green in 1975 that established and identified clear city lament features within the Sumerian compositions describing destroyed cities.[84] She lists destruction, assignment of responsibility for the destruction (this includes the agent of destruction), divine abandonment of the city, restoration, return of the god and presentation of a prayer as the six basic themes common to each of the five documents making up this literary genre. As will be shown below, most scholars since have continued to rely on her findings, particularly for a wider literary comparison both within the confines of Mesopotamian literature and beyond its borders, including biblical literature.

For example, J. Cooper's work in the Curse of Agade (CA) has given attention to the features the latter possesses in relationship to those established in the city laments.[85] In P. Michalowski's analysis of the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (LSUr) with the Curse of Agade, he follows Green's general characteristics and refers the reader to her findings.[86]

With respect to a comparative literary analysis utilizing Green's features outside Mesopotamian literature there is the study of Biblical Lamentations

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[80] Green, "Eridu," 13.
[81] Cohen, *SH* 40–43; Cohen, *CLAM*, 38–39.
[82] W. C. Bouzard, Jr., *We have Heard With Our Ears, O God: Sources of the Communal Laments in the Psalms* (SBLDS 159; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 67–69.
[83] Bouzard, *Sources*, 97. The problem of chronological discontinuity between the historical city laments and the *balags* and *eršemmas* will be addressed in chapter two. Regardless of this obvious chronological discontinuity, scholars cull from both the earlier and later documents given the thematical overlap.
[84] Green, "Eridu." For Mesopotamian features before Green, see J. Krecher, *Sumerische Kultlyrik* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966), 45–51.
[85] Cooper, *CA*, 20–26.
[86] Michalowski, *LSUr*, 10.

done by Gwalthey[87] and Dobbs-Allsopp.[88] Dobbs-Allsopp brings a slight modification to the repertoire of features established by Green. He identifies nine shared traits between the Sumerian city laments and Lamentations rather than Green's six fold categorization.[89] They are *subject and mood*, *structure and poetic technique*, *divine abandonment*, *assignment of responsibility*, *divine agents of destruction*, *destruction*, *the weeping goddess*, *lamentation*, *and restoration of the city and return of the gods*.[90] Of these nine, six overlap with Green and three represent Dobbs-Allsopp additions. The latter consists of *subject and mood*, *the weeping goddess* and *lamentation*.[91] His purpose in modifying Green's generic typology concerns identifying a kindred genre in the Hebrew Bible. Although these nine individual features will be illustrated more fully below, following Dobbs-Allsopp, the general content of the laments (historical city, *balags*, and *eršemmas*) which weaves all the features together can be summarized as follows:[92]

1. Structure and content
    A. Large sections of praise in which the chief deity is frequently described as a powerful cosmogonic divine warrior who is held responsible for the destruction. In some cases a restoration section is part of the structure.

    B. Narrative descriptions of the disaster in which
        (1) the chief deity, responsible for the fate of the city and temple, issues destructive agents, described mainly as storm, divine word and alien invaders
        (2) cities and their environs are destroyed and transformed by fire, flood, and earthquake into abandoned tells
        (3) society is disrupted as city residents are indiscriminately slaughtered or driven into exile

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[87] Gwaltney, *Biblical Book*. The valuable work of Gwaltney will be discussed below under Lament Literature in Israel. Although he establishes a Mesopotamian lament typology using Green's features, they do not form the basis for the current discussion.
[88] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 31–92.
[89] He includes the first millennium *balags* and *eršemmas* for his analysis.
[90] Lamentation and restoration of the city and return of the gods is considered the *Sitz im Leben* of these pieces.
[91] Ibid., 31–32, 75–90, and 90–92.
[92] With few exceptions the content and layout of this summary derives directly from Bouzard, *Sources*, 97–98. Bouzard does recognize some of the different features between the *balags* and *eršemmas* and the city laments proper. These slight differences notwithstanding, his summary of the characteristic features of the first millennium *balags* and *eršemmas* pertains to the historical city laments as well.

(4) the temple is plundered and destroyed which results in divine abandonment and the cessation of cultic activities.

C. Importunities that disaster might end and order be restored including
(1) petitions that the deity awaken
(2) petitions that the deity might gaze upon the disaster
(3) petitions that lesser gods would intercede
(4) petitions that the god/goddess would return to the temple
(5) the woe cry of lamentation "How long?"

2. Various poetic devices, the most notable being
A. A shift in speakers; various *dramatis personae* are given voice

B. Lists, including names of the destroyed temple, epithets of the deity, names of gods said to intercede, etc.

3. A weeping goddess figure who articulates a detailed lament over the destruction of her city and temple; in the *balags* she is not infrequently linked to the Dumuzi myth

4. The absence of penitential motifs

ILLUSTRATION OF THE STANDARD FEATURES OF THE CITY LAMENT

Feature #1 Subject and Mood

In vivid and dramatic narrative poetry each lament deals with death and the destruction of cities and temples. This common subject matter is the thread that holds these literary pieces together. In fact, Cooper designates the laments as "portraits of destruction."[93] Even Michalowski, who sees no homogeneity or commonalities among the laments, admits that the fall and destruction of cities remains the common point.[94]

This grim subject matter colors the poems with a prevailing mood of mourning. The poets create this mood through a variety of poetic tech-

[93] Cooper, *CA*, 20–23.
[94] Michalowski, *LSUr*, 5–6.

niques and by careful juxtaposition of somber features posited throughout. It is these features that distinguish this literature as lament literature. For example, the poets created an effective literary figure, the weeping goddess, who contributes greatly to the ambiance because she wails and weeps over the city's destruction.

The second *kirugu* of LSUr illustrates the merger of subject matter with the mood of the laments:

> The temple of Kis, Hursagkalama, was destroyed,
> Zababa seized upon a strange path away from his
> Beloved dwelling, Mother Ba'u was weeping bitterly
> In her Urukug, "Alas, the destroyed city, my destroyed
> temple!" bitterly she wails (LSUr 115–118).

Feature #2 Structure and Poetic Techniques

Poetic Techniques

Internal poetic structuring techniques abound in the laments. First, there is the diversification of *authorial point of view*. This is accomplished by shifting speakers within the text so that one hears alternative voices, especially the poet's. In the eighth song of the LU the poet interrupts the viewpoint of the weeping goddess who is shouting, "Alas for my house, alas for my house" and becomes involved in the action, "O queen, make thy heart like water; thou, how dost thou live! O Ningal, make thy heart like water, thou, how dost thou live!"[95] The direct speech and personal viewpoints of the city god/goddess, antagonistic male deities, as well as the community are all relevant voices that give flare to these poems.[96] As a result of changing voices, the main subject matter of destruction repeats itself from the unique perspectives of various individual speakers.[97]

The poets also use *contrast* to compare the city's glorious past and its present desolation.[98] For example, NL states, "That great temple whose noise (of activity) was famous, as though it were empty wasteland, no one enters it (now)."[99] Of importance is how in some cases, the contrast motif has a structural function in some of the laments.[100] A good example comes from NL. The first four *kirugu* speak of desolation and *kirugus* 6–12 pertain to restoration. The present desolation contrasts with a future state of glory.

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[95] LU 331–385.
[96] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 41.
[97] Ibid., 40.
[98] Ibid., 39.
[99] NL lines 32–33.
[100] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 40.

Closely linked to the use of contrast is the technique of *reversal* whereby societal norms are astonishingly abnormal. Dobbs-Allsopp states, "The destruction of the city is described via a succession of literary representations depicting the reverse of the normal order of things."[101] With respect to families one expects strong parental and spousal commitments but instead, abandonment of these relationships dominates such as in the following *balag*, "It is because of your word that a (normally) faithful mother abandons her child. The wife of the warrior has abandoned the little child, her (own) child."[102] Likewise, ordinary tasks were neglected; thus UL states, "The faithful cowherds themselves overturned every single cattle pen; the chief shepherds themselves burned every sheepfold, they turned them into (nothing more than) haystack; they crumpled them down like haystacks; they themselves swept over them."[103]

Focus is another essential component that gives internal structure to these poems.[104] In other words, a distinct division exists in the laments with respect to which deity is acting and the ensuing results of those actions. When the city's goddess is the focal point of the poem, attention is drawn to the destruction wrought and in LSUr she declares, "Oh Enlil, what has Ur done to you, why have you turned against it! The *ens* (who lived) outside the city, the *ens* (who lived) inside the city have been carried off by the wind, Ur, like a city crushed by the pickaxe, was counted among the ruin."[105] However, when the deity who brought the destruction is central, attention lies with the destructive power of that deity. Thus the focus of another part of the same lament lies on five deities who exercised their destructive powers, "An had frowned upon all the lands, after Enlil had set his (friendly) face to inimical soil, after Nintu had prostrated her (own) creatures, after Enki had overturned (the course of) the Tigris and Euphrates, after Utu had cursed the roads (and) highways."[106]

Finally, one finds that the poet enjoyed composing with *lists*.[107] On the one hand, long lists prevail concerning those deities who abandoned their respective cities and temples such as the first *kirugu* of LU, "The wild ox has abandoned his stable, the lord of all the lands has abandoned his sheepfold, Enlil has abandoned … Nippur, his sheepfold to the wind …"[108] On the other hand, the list format is used to record the geographical extent of destruction such as in EL, "He destroyed the Kiur, the great place … de-

[101] Ibid.
[102] *balag* 5:97–101.
[103] UL 2:14–16.
[104] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 42.
[105] LSUr 340–356.
[106] LSUr 22–26.
[107] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 44.
[108] *kirugu* 1:1–35.

stroyed her city Urusagrig … destroyed his city Ur, …"[109] Likewise, Green notes that such a style applies to the description of the body parts of the personified storm.[110]

Feature #3 Divine Abandonment

The language and imagery of divine abandonment is quite striking in the laments. In terms of language, all laments reveal a common verbal vocabulary. Typically, the verbs "to depart"[111] or "to abandon"[112] are used.[113] The preferred verb, however, is "to depart". Yet when the god's action involves the temple more specifically, the poet exchanges depart for abandon.[114] These common verbal expressions show more than just the deity's casual deviation from routine activities. In fact, the poet portrays the deity as giving up on his people by withdrawing support in the face of an impending threat – a divinely imposed threat.

The imagery of abandonment is quite vivid. It is expressed metaphorically by the flying bird image. On account of its repetition, this dominant bird metaphor will be examined first. It is not uncommon in Sumerian poetry to image gods, people, or inanimate concepts by an avian metaphor.[115] When depicting gods, sometimes the Sumerian deities appear as a flock of small birds as in the *emesal* cult poetry.[116] At other times they appear, as in the case with Dumuzi, as a flying falcon or as a hunted bird who is forced out of a natural dwelling place.[117] When bird imagery has human referents, cult personnel, a king, or the ordinary citizen may be in view. Still on another occasion enemies of the Sumerian pantheon are spoken of as birds "caught in a net."[118] Thus various verbs related specifically to birds are used in Sumerian literature (catching, chasing, flocking, flying away, rising suddenly into the air or wheeling around in the air).

When turning to the laments that appropriate the bird imagery, several comments are necessary.[119] The image surfaces a total of six times: twice in

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[109] *kirugu* 6.
[110] Green, "Eridu," 287; see also Bouzard, *Sources*, 77.
[111] [`e] in Sumerian.
[112] tag4 in Sumerian or *ezēbum* in Akkadian.
[113] NL 75, 77, 89, 112, 115.
[114] NL 89.
[115] For an historical overview of the Sumerian city laments, see Jacobsen, "Review," 219–224; Kramer, "The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the Mater Dolorosa," 69–72; W. W. Hallo, "Origins," 224–225; See also Michalowski, *LSUr*, 1–3.
[115] Jeremy Black, "The Imagery of Birds in Sumerian Poetry," in *Mesopotamian Poetic Language* (eds. M.E. Vogelzang and H. L. Vanstiphout; Groningen: STYX, 1996), 23.
[116] Black, "Imagery," 23.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] These include NL, EL, LSUr and LU.

LSUr[120] and EL respectively and one time in LU (235–238) and NL (82). In all these laments, the metaphor refers to the deity at least one time. However, in both the LSUr and EL material where there are two instances of bird imagery, one referent is the deity and the other is a human. For example, EL speaks of Damgalnunna as one who "like a flying bird left her city" (1:14). But alternately, the religious attendants of the temple have been "caught like small birds chased from their hiding places" (4:15). In LSUr, King Ibbi-Suen who was captured and exiled by the enemy is described "like a bird that has flown its nest he did not return to his city" (LSUr 37). Later on in the same lament the author portrays Ninhursag "like a dove she flew from the window, she stood away on the plain" (LSUr 208). Finally, in the synonymous parallelism found in LU, the lady/Ningal is also depicted as one who "like a flying bird departed from her city" (237–38). Thus, the deity is the main referent in the laments.[121]

Likewise, in all these examples (except for EL 4:15), the "flying" bird image dominates. The verb *dal*, "to fly away" is the particular behavior the poet wishes to emphasize. This suits the poet's intentions better than any other bird behavior that could be used to describe abandonment. The poet's intentions seem deliberate. The flying bird imagery best describes divine abandonment. Both *mushen* (bird) and *tu* (dove or pigeon) are used in speaking of divine abandonment. In *balag* 50, the dove is used of the goddess as one who must abandon her temple.

To be sure, a comparison from the Curse of Agade is helpful at this juncture. The inclusion of the CA in this study has been avoided due to its uncertain genre classification. However, much like the historical city laments, it records Inanna's departure of the city and shrine. The author of CA describes Inanna's abandonment quite differently. Cooper translates the section in the following manner, "like a young woman abandoning her woman's domain, Holy Inanna abandoned the sanctuary Agade, like a warrior advancing to arms, she removed battle and combat from the city … ."[122] The language in the CA highlights how the goddess has distanced herself from her responsibilities with respect to Agade, just like the deities in the laments. But a militant march out of the city is in view[123] and not a speedy departure such as characterized in the laments. The contrast between the Curse of Agade and the city laments shows how deliberate the poets were with images when speaking of abandonment. Thus, although bird imagery is common in Sumerian poetry, in the laments it seems to have a very specific usage.

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[120] LSUr 208, 273; EL 1:14–15; 4:15.
[121] See also *eršemma* 166:16–17, "(Now) the lady has left this city, the supreme lady has left this house." And *balag* 4:110, "you should not desert …you should not desert the Ekur!"
[122] Cooper, *CA*, 53.
[123] Cooper, *CA,* 241.

Images of abandonment are also created through anthropomorphic language. This language sometimes produces several interesting conceptions regarding the deities. First and common to all but NL is the use of dwelling terminology (the language of coming and going) to describe the deity's presence or absence. The emphasis seems to lie on divine freedom and accessibility to the populace. Just as one freely enters and exits a house, city or land, so too the gods come and go and have easy access to their temple, people and land. Thus LSUr states that the god "stepped outside" his/her present dwelling.[124] EL utilizes the typical Sumerian expression for "going out" (`e) and states, the city's lord and mother have "stayed outside" or "left" the city and temple respectively.[125] Likewise, in LU it is said of the deity, "Thou does not dwell as its dweller."[126]

In NL, however, the deity is portrayed as having "set his face away", "set foot away", "turned his face", "lifted his chest away from it", or "turned it over" in reference to either the city, the temple or both.[127] At once the reader notices the dominance of these anthropomorphic images. Besides the similar rendering in UL 2:23 describing the deity as having turned against it these particular phrases are unique to NL. Two of the images are set in the context of rhetorical questioning and, as such, depict the viewpoint of the people.[128] As the verb "abandon" rather than "depart" was used specifically to speak of the deity's departure from the temple, so too here, the phrases "turned his face" and "lifted his chest" speak only of the deity in relationship to the temple.[129]

Second, the pace of the departure as evidenced by the anthropomorphic language is of significance. With the exception of NL, the poet speaks of a rapid abandonment rather than a slow and reluctant move away.[130] This is illustrated especially well in the summation of the catastrophe in UL. *Kirugu* 2 mentions that "all the important gods either 'evacuated,' 'kept away,' 'hid in the mountains,' or 'wandered about' in the plains."[131] And in UL 2:21 the deities are described as ones who "ran off." These verbs naturally reflect suddenness in the departure as opposed to a casual and expected departure. This depiction of the gods running, evacuating and vanishing in light of danger ties in well with the ideas created from the flying bird characterizations. These images leave room for a return to the natural order of things and the assumption that the threat will eventually be re-

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[124] LSUr 133, 375–377, 167.
[125] EL 1:11–12, 15, 5:1.
[126] LU 340.
[127] NL 71, 75, 81, 84, 89, 96 respectively.
[128] NL 81, 84.
[129] NL 84, 89.
[130] Curiously, neither the pace nor the surprise nature of abandonment are a focal point in this lament.
[131] *kirugu* 2:25–26.

moved. The gods will no longer need to hide and will be able to inhabit the premises once again. The leaving implied from the samples supplied above is not specific to the temple or shrine but focus on the city. No explicit reference is made to the deity's departure from the shrine itself; it is merely implied by the distancing of the deity from the city.

Even though a general tendency prevails to depict a speedy departure, it should be pointed out that one does detect reluctance, however, in two of the laments. Ningal initially refuses to leave but then, due to the destruction, is forced out.[132] Likewise, in LSUr Enlil must exhort Nanna to leave the city. Implicit in this is a display of Nanna's resistance to a certain extent.[133]

The third image created by the anthropomorphic language of the poets gives the reader insight into abandonment as experienced by the deity. Their journey "abroad," is likened to an exile which includes settling in unfamiliar territories.[134] However, the Uruk poet is careful to qualify the exilic nature of the departure by the following explanatory clause, "though not an enemy, was exiled."[135] The latter idea is alluded to, but only remotely, in NL where the lord of the city "set his face away to a hostile place."[136] Likewise, this idea consistently surfaces in LSUr.[137] In the restoration section of EL, in a prayer to Enki, the supplicant personifies the sentiment of Sumer's departed deities with the statement that "living in an alien city is miserable … living in an alien temple is miserable."[138]

From these three anthropomorphic images, two conceptions emerge for an understanding of the theme. Either the images reflect the disfavor of the god(s) (hence the setting of the face in opposition), or they represent a withdrawal of support, allegiance or responsibility. Each of these expressions betrays the sentiment of the poet quite vividly and signifies creative choice relative to the theme of divine distance. Thus, when considering the language of abandonment in conjunction with metaphorical and anthropomorphic images, conceptions of divine abandonment are revealed and continually being reinforced through a variety of expressions.

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[132] LU 143.
[133] LSUr 370.
[134] UL 2:22, 24, 26.
[135] UL 2:24.
[136] NL 71.
[137] LSUr 134, 160, 201.
[138] EL 7:10–20.

Feature #4 Assignment of Responsibility

Apart from one text[139] that might hint at a rationale for abandonment, the viewpoints expressed in each poem maintain a certain innocence of the city and its people. The poets find no reasonable human rationale for the devastation.[140] Neither the city, nor its people seem to be guilty of any crime that might have provoked such aggression. The people did nothing deserving of divine abandonment and its consequences. Rather they are suffering from what seems to be the whimsical nature of their Sumerian deities who are angered without justification. Hence, the Sumerian deities are assigned responsibility for the destruction, another dominant feature found in the laments.

Theoretically, it is the omnipotent anger of the gods that is responsible for the terror that fell on Sumer. In the laments, Enlil's wrath, resulting in the destruction of Sumer, finds no justification in Sumer's sins or transgressions.[141] Gwaltney states that, "there appears no resort to the justness of the gods."[142] Whether one describes this as divine whim or fate, Sumer suffers greatly at the hands of their gods. This is evident from one among many direct statements in EL, "The city, as if An had cursed it, it alone he destroyed. As if Enlil had glared angrily at it, Eridu, the shrine Abzu, bowed low."[143] Likewise, several *balags* point out both An and Enlil's responsibilities: "the city against which Enlil rushes! That city with which Enlil has started a quarrel! At which An frowns!"[144] *Balag* 43:a+8–10 reads, "Storm, angry heart of great An! Storm, destructive heart of Enlil!" In some cases Enlil's anger is characterized by a gaze, one that is not encouraging and leads to the destruction, "Law and order cease to exist … after An had frowned upon all the lands."[145] "And the lord … looked evilly on Sumer, he demolished it."[146]

At the practical level, the anger of the gods translates into an irrevocable plan to destroy.[147] The plan is carried out through An and Enlil, but primarily Enlil. Subsequently, the "word of Enlil" cannot be revoked.[148] LSUr says, "the verdict of the assembly cannot be turned back, the word commanded by Enlil knows no overturning …." and "Enlil alters not the com-

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[139] UL A:3. This observation derives from a section in the UL that scholars are unsure of because it is badly preserved. Green notes that the section labeled A:1–A:9 might be the beginning of *kirugu* 2 (Green, *Uruk*, 267).
[140] See below.
[141] But see UL A:3 where the sun god is said to be one who, "bore a heavy burden of sin."
[142] Gwaltney, *Biblical Book*, 207.
[143] EL 1:25–26; 7:4.
[144] *balag* 50:b+115–119; c.f. Cohen; Bouzard, *Sources*, 79.
[145] LSUr 20–22.
[146] EL 6:4.
[147] LU 150–151, 160–161, 168–169; LSUr 57, 365; UL 12:38.
[148] LU 150–151; LSUr 57; 163–164, 365; CA 99; UL 3:27; 12:38.

mand which he had issued."[149] Even though Enlil shoulders most of the responsibility, the texts do blame both An and Enlil, "The word commanded by An and Enlil, who can oppose it?"[150] Such is the acknowledgement of the city goddess when questioned concerning the devastation to her city in LU, "after they had pronounced the utter destruction of Ur, after they had directed that its people be killed … to Anu the water of my eye verily I poured; to Enlil I in person verily made supplication … verily Anu changed not this word; verily Enlil … soothed not my heart."[151] The goddess assigns full responsibility to An and Enlil but neither to herself nor foreign enemies.[152] Thus the laments assign specific responsibility to Enlil's anger, gaze, and word for the havoc in the land.[153] In sum, then, it is the deity's anger coupled with his irrevocable word, void of any human cause or intervention that assumes responsibility for the destruction in the laments.

Feature #5 Divine Agent(s) of Destruction

With Enlil's irrevocable decree to destroy in place, the plan must be executed. Enlil possesses several weapons in his arsenal such as the evil storm,[154] the pickaxe,[155] fire,[156] foreign invaders[157] and the power of his own word.[158] However, it is the storm and enemy invasion that dominate.

As a figure of speech the storm symbolizes the first of the two primary destructive forces in the laments. After Enlil petitions for the evil storm to

[149] LU 169; LSUr 364–370.
[150] LSUr 57.
[151] LU 141.
[152] Bouzard, *Sources*, 84.
[153] Since the city laments do not ascribe the cause of the calamity to any human agency, perhaps this serves as an explanation for the lack of penitential elements in the laments. But a Sumerian theology derived from the city laments alone, which do not equate societal disaster with notions of corporate or personal sin, is not a balanced view. There are first millennium examples where human guilt contributes to a city's fall. In "The Esarhaddon Inscription," the Neo-Assyrian king (680–669 B.C.) explained Marduk's abandonment and the subsequent destruction of Babylon with the reign of Sennacherib as a result of Babylon's political, moral/social and religious offenses. See Mordechai Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah, and Israel in the Eight and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), 12. In addition, Bouzard rightfully notes, "that divine wrath could be associated with personal sins of commission or omission is, of course, amply witnessed by several other types of prayers …." (Bouzard, *Sources*, 86). He refers to some *ki'utakam* and *dingirsadibba* prayers and not the *balags* and *eršemmas.*
[154] LU 173, 175–176; UL 3:2–3.
[155] LU 245, 258, 272, 340.
[156] LU 259–260.
[157] LSUr 80b, 264, 346; NL 98.
[158] UL 1:8; LU 139.

replace the good storm[159] the storm raises havoc and devastates everything in its path.[160] NL states, "Its lord has turned it over to the hand of the evil wind, it destroyed that city, that house, ripped out its foundations, broke it up with the pickaxe, killed its spouses (and) children in its midst … the wind (storm) carried off its possessions, turned that existing city into a non-existing city …."[161]

Enlil and the storm can function together.[162] Enlil's word is as powerful as the storm and in some instances the word of Enlil becomes the actual storm. This is especially true in the *balags*. Bouzard notes that in the *balag* compositions the agent generating the destruction is preeminently the destructive power of Enlil's word.[163] For example, "His word is a storm which chases all five out from a household of five."[164] Thus, in his anger Enlil attacks his own city, land and temple. He caused and carried out the destruction by means of his powerful word.

Enemy invasion is the second principle means by which destruction is carried out in the laments. Enlil sends foreign invaders that are specifically named in the five historical laments.[165] According to LU he sends Subarians and Elamites, "the lofty unapproachable mountain, the Ekishnugal, its righteous house by large axes is devoured; the Subarian and the Elamites, the destroyers, made of it thirty shekel …."[166] He also sends Gutians as in, "Like arrows in a quiver … evildoers … in Sumer … Gutium, the enemy overturned …."[167] In the *balags* and *eršemmas*, however, the invaders are not identified and are designated as "the enemy." Thus the goddess notes how "the enemy has carried off the good spouse. The enemy has carried off the good child."[168] The invaders and their ensuing damage are historically suspect, however. Most consider the enemy invasion a literary convention; thus, "their described behavior is typical and their destructive activities are simply extensions of the destructive power of Enlil's storm and word."[169]

At times, invasion and storm imagery merge. Dobbs-Allsopp, following Cooper, suggests "storm and invasion imagery become mixed, and the

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[159] UL 3:2–3; LU 173; NL 96. But note also that the storm mentioned in Sumerian *myths* does not devastate but brings a beneficial outcome to humanity according to Jacobsen, (*Treasures of Darkness*, 98–104).
[160] LU 171–204, 391–415; NL 96–107.
[161] NL 96–103.
[162] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 56; Bouzard, *Sources*, 80.
[163] Bouzard, *Sources*, 79
[164] *balag* 9:1–17, especially line 16.
[165] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 57.
[166] LU 242–244.
[167] UL 4:9–11.
[168] *eršemma* 106:11–16, cf. Bouzard, *Sources*, 81.
[169] Bouzard, *Sources*, 81.

storm sometimes seems to serve as the chief metaphor for the foreign invasion initiated by Enlil."[170] An example from LSUr is appropriate:

> This is what Enlil, the shepherd of the black-headed people did;
> Enlil, to destroy the faithful house, to decimate the faithful man,
> To set the evil eye on the son of the faithful man, the first-born,
> On that day, Enlil brought the Guti out from the mountains.
> Their coming was the flood of Enlil that cannot be withstood,
> The great storm of the plain filled the plain, it went before them,
> The wide plain was destroyed, no one passed by there.
>
> On that bloody day, mouths were crushed, heads were crashed,
> The storm was a harrow coming from above, the city was struck by a pickaxe.
> On that day, heaven rumbled, earth trembled, the storm never slept,
> The heavens were darkened, they were covered by a shadow,
> The sun lay down at the horizon, the dust passed over the mountains,
> The moon lay at the zenith, the people were afraid.[171]

Thus, through the venues of the storm and enemy invasion the decision of the divine assembly to destroy finds success and the laments proceed to detail the devastating effects.

Feature #6 Description of Destruction

Descriptions of destruction fill each lament with unforgettable imagery. The poets seem primarily concerned about "vivid portrayals of the actual destruction and its debilitating effects and consequences for every day life."[172] One *balag* reads,

> The reed bed dried up in its own pool.
> The crops were drowned on their stalks.
> The houses leaned off their pillars.
> The city lay off its foundation.

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[170] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 57.
[171] LSUr 72–84.
[172] Bouzard, *Sources*, 92.

> The nation was destroyed right off its very foundation.
> The cattle pen was scattered along with its cows.
> The sheepfold was torn out along with its sheep.
> The house along with its nest was carried off.
> Expressing divine anger, the deluge swept on.
> The flood gored even the highlands and the
> lowlands which had been secure (*balag* 25:a+19–20).

Upon reading the city laments one sees the progressive nature of the description of the destruction. There is a systematic geographical movement of destruction in the region. The enemy first attacks greater Sumer, outlying areas and eventually the city.[173] LU describes it in the following manner,

> Outside the city, the outer city verily has been
> destroyed, alas for my city I will say. Inside
> the city, the inner city verily has been destroyed,
> alas for my house, I will say. My houses of the
> outer city verily have been destroyed, alas for my
> city I will say; My houses of the inner city verily
> have been destroyed, alas for my house I will say (LU 261–264).

Likewise, a similar progression ensues when the poet describes destruction on the sanctuary. Four of the five city laments narrate the temple's destruction in a systematic and progressive way.[174] Noteworthy is Green's description concerning EL 2:12–3:7, "the progress of the attacking force (symbolized as a violent storm) is traced through the city from the main gate into the innermost sanctum of the ziggurat. The route is direct: city gate and door are breached, the residential quarter and populace are destroyed, the temple is encircled, its external structure shaken, and then its gate and door are penetrated. Within the shrine, the sacred symbols and treasures and the cultic personnel are attacked and defiled."[175] Bouzard's observation is key here. He comments how the poets spend more time describing the dreadful fate of the temple than the city itself.[176]

Dobbs-Allsopp also highlights the nature of the destruction relative to the city's inhabitants and its social, religious and political customs.[177] The city's citizens are slaughtered and their corpses piled, suffer famine or

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[173] LU 261–264; LSUr 40, 346–347.
[174] Thus the Ekishnugal of Nanna, LSUr 407b–448; the Ekur of Enlil, NL 53–78; and LU 116–133, 276–281.
[175] Green, "The Eridu Lament," 127–128. The attack of the sacred symbols and treasures is especially evident in the EL 2:12–3:7 and NL 53–78. See also EL 2:1–4, 2:5–11, 2:12–15, 2:16–3:4.
[176] Bouzard, *Sources*, 93.
[177] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 66–74.

experience exile as a result.[178] The plight of key personnel such as king and prince are also singled out.[179] The description of the breakdown socially, religiously and politically concerns the poet. As one might expect, all this turmoil leads to nothing but lamentation, mourning, and woe and the introduction of an important literary figure.

Feature #7 The Weeping Goddess

This weeping goddess, as coined by S. Kramer, makes her debut in Sumerian lament literature.[180] The role of the goddess in the laments reveals how closely goddesses were associated to their cities. Their association and identification with their respective cities made them responsible for the well-being of the city and its inhabitants. As Dobbs-Allsopp notes, the goddess was seen as protecting a people, city or individuals.[181] Goddesses, too, were patrons and overseers of cities.[182]

In the laments the goddess is the unfortunate recipient of the devastating news of destruction decreed by Enlil. Even though she appears as a suppliant to the divine council, "to Enlil I in person verily make supplication" (LU 146), she is unable to stop the decree, "Anu changes not his command; Enlil alters not the command which he had issued" (LU 168–170), and is forced to abandon her city and become a foreigner in a land not her own, "Woe is me, I am one who has been exiled from the city, I am one who has found no rest; I, Ningal, I am one who has been exiled from the house, I am one who has found no dwelling place, Lo, I am a stranger sitting with raised head in a strange city."[183] Although the poets portray her as an assertive figure, she remains powerless with respect to the decision making process within the divine council. As a result, she bitterly grieves the loss of her people, temple, and city, "to Anu the water of my eye verily I poured."[184] She enters into a mourning period as one does the loss of a loved one.

In each lament, except for NL, a goddess grieves over the destruction of her city.[185] In the latter, Nippur itself complains in the first person concerning the city's distress.[186] This personification of Nippur is contrasted with Ur in the other laments. McDaniel rightly points out how "Ur is never

[178] NL 66; LU 213–216; LSUr 303–308; NL 44; 21–23.
[179] LSUr 34–37; UL 2a:3.
[180] Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 69–80.
[181] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 88.
[182] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 45.
[183] LU 307–309.
[184] LU 145; 80–85.
[185] LU 80–85; LSUr 115–284; EL 5:3–11; UL 7–11; and UL 54 following Green (*Uruk*, 254).
[186] Tinney, *Nippur Lament*, 151.

personified and the one who weeps and mourns is the goddess Ningal."[187] The weeping goddess makes regular appearances in the *balags* and *eršemmas* and also mourns over the loss of her unidentified spouse and son.[188] Thus the lady of the Eanna[189] says, "Oh, my spouse!" She says, "Oh my child!"[190]

The city laments often emphasize the goddess as protector and defender of the city. For example, LU shows Ningal rushing to her city's defense like a bird flapping.[191] Likewise, Ninlil, the great mother of the Nippur Lament has heart felt concern for the security of her people in their dwellings.[192]

Accompanying the act of weeping by the goddess, one also finds various mourning gestures expected of one suffering from grief such as stretching, lifting up of hands, self-mutilation,[193] and clawing at the breast.[194] Again, LU exemplifies this well. The poet says of Ningal, "The woman tore her hair like the … reed; her chest, the pure …, she strikes, 'alas for my city.'"[195]

Feature #8 Lamentation

Not only does the weeping goddess contribute to the atmosphere of mourning on account of all her gestures, but also the poet's continual use of refrains common to funeral dirges maintains the atmosphere.[196] Most often the poets show relatives lamenting the loss of their loved ones such as, "Oh, my father!" And even the weeping goddess expresses dirge-like sentiments for her city and temple, "Alas, my city! Alas, my house!"[197] Still another way the poet maintains this mood of mourning is through the repetition of

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[187] Thomas F. McDaniel, "The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations," *VT* 18 (1968): 201.
[188] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 82; Bouzard, *Sources*, 77–78.
[189] That is Inanna.
[190] *balag* 50:b+262. Kramer suggests that the Sumerian weeping goddess is, in fact, a prototype of the Mater-Dolorosa (Kramer, "Weeping Goddess" 69–80). When the weeping goddess does not feature prominently, it has been suggested by numerous scholars that the personification of cities into female images in both West and East Semitic represents a vestige/reflex of the weeping goddess (Gwaltney, *Biblical Book*, 208; Bouzard, *Sources*, 166; Aloysius Fitzgerald, "BTWLT and BT as Titles for Capital Cities," *CBQ* [1975]: 167–183).
[191] LU 3:80–85.
[192] NL 190–210.
[193] Found in funerals as well.
[194] LU 80–85; LSUr 115–284; *balag* 1:46–63; 3:18.
[195] LU 299–300.
[196] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 90–91.
[197] E.g. *balag* 10:a+116; LU 247–248; LSUr 118, 122, 126; EL 1:27; 2:19 or NL 31, 36, 37, 80.

exclamatory questions and interjections. Often the question, "how long?" or mourning cries such as "woe!" and "alas!" are articulated.[198]

Feature #9 Restoration of the City and Return of the Gods

Restoration in General

Restoration lies in the hands of the deity's favorable decree or command much like the decree for destruction.[199] Enlil and his spoken word is ultimately responsible for restoration of the city, people, temple, and the return of the deities to their appropriate shrines throughout the land; accordingly LSUr exclaims, "at the friendly speech of Enlil, it (Ur) lifted neck to heaven,"[200] and at "The word spoken by An and Enlil, it (Ur) is delivered."[201] However, in two laments (UL and NL) Enlil's primary agent for carrying out restoration is Išme-Dagan, Sumer's divinely appointed shepherd king. On account of his faithful leadership people live in ultimate peace and security and experience utopian days of prosperity. To that end, Enlil is exalted in all the earth.[202]

Restoration of the City

In the laments, discussion of the city's restoration takes shape in one of two ways, either through pleas for restoration without further poetic elaboration of it, or simply by descriptions of restoration usually accompanied with a plea. Concerning the former, in a poorly preserved *kirugu* of EL line one reads, "may (he) restore it for you."[203] And Nanna pleas two times to Enlil to provide restoration to the city. In the latter text Nanna asks Enlil to cast a friendly eye or look on Ur.[204]

With respect to those laments that resort to full poetic descriptions of restoration, no two descriptions of restoration are similar. For example, LU assumes restoration has already been accomplished and does not elaborate, "O Nanna, may the city which has been restored to its place step forth gloriously before thee … it exalts thee."[205] However, in LSUr and NL the poet prefers to elaborate as will be developed below.

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[198] LU 374; NL 31, 36, 37; *balag* 4:195; and for mourning cries, see LU 231–234; LSUr 361–362; NL 30, 41, 43.
[199] NL 6:160; 7:189.
[200] LSUr 4:475.
[201] LSUr 4:479–480.
[202] LU 423–435.
[203] EL 8:1.
[204] LSUr 352–356; 460–465.
[205] LU 423, 435.

In LSUr Enlil pronounces the blessing of restoration and rebuilding on Ur and the Ekishnugal.[206] Subsequently, there is a regathering of people to Ur.[207] Both Nanna and Ningal return to their city and temple.[208] Finally, the short and last *kirugu* of LSUr is devoted to celebrating restoration.[209] For restoration to be effected the enemy must be wiped out.[210] Only then may Ur's reign be long and its people and customs experience abundance.[211] NL, however, offers the most substantial account of the theme of the city's restoration as evidenced by the amount of space the poet gives to the subject and its development.

In NL the poet allots about half of the literary space to the subject of restoration.[212] The latter part of the lament which deals with restoration is a reversal or inversion of the first part which described destruction. This is especially noticeable in *kirugus* 6 and 7. In *kirugu* 6 Enlil destroyed the enemy, took pity on Nippur and is about to return to his temple.[213] In *kirugu* 7 he returns the *mes* and rituals; reunites and returns the people to Nippur.[214] The description of restoration is also progressive. It starts in Nippur[215] and expands to the rest of Sumer and Akkad.[216] Additionally, there is a distinct change of tone in the lament beginning with *kirugus* 4–5 as it discusses the hope of restoration. This positive tone is developed and fulfilled in the subsequent *kirugus*, 6–11, and comes to a head in the final *kirugu* of the lament.[217] Furthermore, the restoration described is not limited to a physical restoration, but includes a spiritual restoration as well.[218]

Some of the key elements of restoration in NL might be summarized by the seven following points. (1) A change in the deity's disposition.[219] NL mentions that Enlil commissioned the restoration of the city on account of a change of heart. (2) The election of a new ruler, Išme-Dagan,[220] by Enlil.

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[206] LSUr 423, 435.
[207] LSUr 476–479.
[208] LSUr 480–484.
[209] LSUr 493–511.
[210] LSUr 490–500.
[211] LSUr 501–511.
[212] *kirugus* 6–12. The first five *kirugu* describe destruction.
[213] NL 157–159.
[214] NL 167–171; 206–210.
[215] *kirugu* 7.
[216] *kirugu* 8.
[217] *kirugu* 12.
[218] NL 167–171.
[219] NL 4:137, 150–153; 6:159–162.
[220] This election of Išme-Dagan by Enlil reflects the special favor he had with the deity. He was the king of Isin (1953–1935 B.C.) who was granted permission to rebuild the temple in Nippur and restore the destroyed city. The Isin Dynasty succeeded the Ur III kings, and as the Sumerian King List shows, it was divinely elected to rebuild and restore the major cities in southern Mesopotamia. See Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–330 B.C.* (vol. 1; Routledge: London, 1995), 77–79.

(3) The role of Išme-Dagan. First, he is described as the valiant one, pious, devout, son of Enlil, king-priest and the true shepherd.[221] Second, the results of his reign promise the rebuilding of the *Ekur* and revival to religious life in Sumer, peace and security for the people and ultimately the exaltation of Enlil.[222] Third, the duration of his reign promises great length.[223] Kramer summarizes the role of Išme-Dagan best, "Enlil showers gracious favors upon the pious Išme-Dagan and grants him a long reign and as a result the people will live in peace and security and keep exalting Enlil."[224] And even though UL mentions Išme-Dagan, his role in the restoration phase of Sumerian civilization is best described by NL.

As a result of Išme-Dagan's righteous leadership and Enlil's gracious favors other elements of restoration in NL include the remaining four points. (4) A regathering of people from exile. Ninlil and Enlil return to Nippur and together bring back from exile the enslaved people.[225] (5) Rebuilding the *Ekur* and making Nippur the spiritual center of the land.[226] (6) The presence of the gods once again in their midst.[227] (7) And utopian days; *kirugus* 9–11 describe what Kramer calls utopian days of prosperity and well being. The areas of prosperity included are restoration of morality of emotions,[228] growth of Sumer-Akkad,[229] houses and storehouses,[230] birth of living beings and animals,[231] and justice prevailing in the land.[232] Note that lines 322–323 show how the people multiplied because they were well cared for.[233] These utopian days also highlight "ethical, moral, altruistic social and familial behavior."[234] Thus these *kirugu* describe a return to the expected normal order of things. These seven elements found in NL reflect a thorough restoration process not outlined in the other laments.

Return of the Gods

The deity's return to the city, an event ultimately marking full restoration, also appears in two forms, either through pleas for the deity to return or

[221] Most of *kirugu* 12 is dedicated to his portrayal.
[222] NL 12:319.
[223] NL 12:314–318.
[224] Kramer, "Nippur," 4.
[225] NL 7:207–214.
[226] NL 6:164–174.
[227] *kirugu* 8 describes city by city restoration of its gods and people.
[228] NL 9:252–254.
[229] NL 9:254.
[230] NL 9:256.
[231] NL 9:257–262.
[232] NL 9:264.
[233] NL 322–323.
[234] Kramer, "Nippur," 24.

narrative descriptions of the return. As Green has noted,[235] only the Ur and Eridu Laments offer pleas to Ningal and Enki, insisting for the return of the gods to their shrines.[236]

However, LSUr and NL offer a narrative account of the event. LSUr is brief but states "Father Nanna went head high to his city, Ur … the valiant Sin enters his Ekishnugal."[237] NL utilizes two full *kirugu* for these purposes; one *kirugu* to describe the return of the gods to Nippur[238] and another to narrate their return to other Sumerian cities.[239] Enlil and Ninlil's returns are also documented in lines 208–209, 214 respectively.[240] But regardless, due to the closing prayer and celebration that are presented to the god at the end of each lament, it is safe to assume that the actual return/restoration of the god(s) to their shrine(s) is brought about.[241]

In summary then, LSUr and NL's narration provide the most information with respect to the city's restoration and the return of the deities. By comparison LSUr, however, is more compact and succinct as regards the rebuilding and regathering process. Likewise, the description of Ur's restored glory is truncated. Unlike the NL the shepherd king Išme-Dagan goes unmentioned. Furthermore, an important aspect of restoration in LSUr is the total destruction of Sumer's enemies, a point only briefly made in the NL.[242] However, the NL's description of restoration is lengthy and includes: restoration of leadership,[243] restoration of the land,[244] restoration of a unified national life,[245] restoration of Enlil's sovereignty and his exaltation,[246] restoring peaceful security,[247] restoring temples,[248] restoring the divine presence,[249] restoring worship,[250] and restoring fruitfulness to the land.[251] Restoration is, therefore, presented as the hope of the poet, a vital component to the collapse of a city, its shrines, and people.

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[235] Green, "Eridu," 306.
[236] LU 331–338; EL *kirugu* 7.
[237] LSUr 4:480–484.
[238] *kirugu* 7.
[239] *kirugu* 8.
[240] NL 208–209, 214.
[241] Green, "Eridu," 307.
[242] The NL states, "even now your Lord has smitten you for the enemy fury" (6:157).
[243] *kirugu* 6.
[244] *kirugu* 8.
[245] *kirugus* 7 and 11.
[246] *kirugu* 12.
[247] *kirugu* 12.
[248] *kirugus* 6 and 7.
[249] *kirugu* 7:208.
[250] *kirugu* 6.
[251] *kirugu* 9.

SUMMARY

In this section on city laments in Mesopotamia I have reviewed the five historical city laments, *balags* and *eršemmas*. Brief consideration was given to their date of composition, language, content, structure, authorship, and cultic use in order to provide some context for the ensuing discussion. But most important, the standard features commonly associated with the city laments and their first millennium counterparts, the *balags* and *eršemmas* were isolated and illustrated from the primary sources. Although the historical city lament had a short life span in terms of tradition history, their features influenced the *balags* and *eršemmas*. As a result of this thematic overlap, scholars typically cull support from both the earlier and later documents in order to obtain a better understanding of other Mesopotamian literature as well as biblical material. Now that an understanding of the Mesopotamian genre has been considered, we turn to Israelite literature for a similar analysis.

CHAPTER TWO: CITY LAMENTS IN ISRAEL

INTRODUCTION

On the basis of the research previously discussed on city lament features in the Mesopotamian corpus, biblical scholars have observed and interpreted city laments in the Hebrew Bible. This chapter, therefore, proceeds to outline those blocks of Israelite literature deemed by scholars as exhibiting city lament features. The most obvious place one finds these is in the book of Lamentations as well as some of the communal laments in the Psalms. Other texts include a few of the oracles against the nations, and some prophetic passages. Out of necessity, this section follows closely the works of Dobbs-Allsopp (on Lamentations and the oracles against the nations), Bouzard (communal laments and Jeremiah), and Rilett Wood (Micah) as they have demonstrated, convincingly in my opinion, the presence of city lament features in these texts.[252]

CITY LAMENT FEATURES IN LAMENTATIONS

Although many have noticed and debated the significance of the parallels between the Mesopotamian laments and Lamentations, the leading voices in the discussion are Gwaltney, Dobbs-Allsopp, and McDaniel.[253] Gwaltney's work asks a vital question: Are there literary antecedents in the ANE to the book of Lamentations? Based on Green's features[254] he creates a typology for the first millennium *balags* and *eršemmas* under four major headings: (1) ritual occasions, (2) form/structure, (3) poetic technique, and (4) theology.[255] His study answers the question affirmatively and argues that the first millennium *balags* and *eršemmas* are the lineal liturgical descendants of the historical city laments and, as such, have strong analogies with Lamentations.[256] He affirms a literary influence between the two cultures. Thus, the gap in time between the historical city laments and biblical Lamentations is accounted for by the *balags* and *eršemmas*.[257] He also suggests that due to both the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations, the two cultures likely had contact.[258]

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[252] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations derive from the RSV.
[253] Gwaltney, "Biblical Book," 191–211; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 30–96; Thomas F. McDaniel, "Alleged Sumerian Influence," 198–209.
[254] Green, "Eridu," 277–307.
[255] Gwaltney, "Biblical Book," 204–205.
[256] Ibid., 205, 210.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid.

Dobbs-Allsopp's research asks an entirely different question: Did Israel possess a lament genre of her own?[259] By asking this question he is rejecting Gwaltney's argument of literary dependency and, as will be shown below, also attempting to deal with both the similarities and differences. As articulated previously in chapter one, Dobbs-Allsopp reconfigures Green's established features for the historical city lament and then examines Lamentations in light of those features.[260] The following summarizes his observations in Lamentations with the view to highlighting the most salient texts exhibiting the features.[261]

Lamentations obviously concerns Jerusalem's fall, something apparent in all five of the book's poems. The fall of Jerusalem causes the prevailing mood of mourning found in the book. This accounts for the first feature noted by Dobbs-Allsopp, *subject and mood.*[262] Not surprisingly, given the poetic nature of the book, Lamentations uses a variety of *structural and poetic techniques* to describe the event. With respect to structure, both *qinah* meter and the well-known Hebrew acrostic are used as structuring devises (Lam 1, 2, 4). A few examples of *poetic techniques* used in Lamentations will suffice. One such technique reflects the poet as internal observer, one who sees Jerusalem's ruination and testifies that it is as vast as the sea (Lam 3:13). The contrast motif contrasts the lonely city to the previously populated city (Lam 1:1),[263] and the reversal motif sadly reveals how Zion's roads no longer ring with joy but instead are in mourning (Lam 1:4).[264] Admittedly, these first two features (*subject and mood; structural and poetic techniques)* can be found outside city lament literature. Dobbs-Allsopp mentions this when speaking of the *subject and mood* feature.[265] However, when these items are juxtaposed with other generic lament features, it is their cumulative force that enables one to assign the lament

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[259] Delbert Hillers first posed this question in order to account for the similarities and differences between biblical Lamentations and Mesopotamian lament literature. Rather than assume a direct cultural borrowing, one that cannot account for notable differences, he entertains the idea that a native Israelite "city lament" genre existed. To be sure, "A 'city-lament' genre would be an abstraction made, for the sake of discussion, to refer to a common theme: the destruction of city and sanctuary, with identifiable imagery specific to this theme, and common sub-topics and poetic devices" (28). In this way the literature of the two cultures shares a generic relationship (see below). See Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations* (AB 7a; 2nd rev. ed.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1992), 32–39. Although Hillers asked the question and offered initial evidence for his view, Dobbs-Allsopp's work establishes Hillers' hypothesis.

[260] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 7.

[261] Ibid., 30–96. In the discussion that follows I have judiciously chosen texts from Dobbs-Allsopp's list in order to aid the discussion.

[262] The specific features will be italicized in order to allow the reader to follow.

[263] See also Lam 2:1b, 6b.

[264] See also Lam 5:8–14.

[265] Dobbs- Allsopp, *Weep*, 31–32.

label.[266] Although not as explicit a portrayal to that found in the historical laments, *divine abandonment* is seen implicitly where Yahweh is described as one who has forgotten his footstool (Lam 2:1c) and withdrawn support (Lam 2:3b).[267] In contrast to the historical laments, *assignment of responsibility* for the destruction lies squarely with the sins of Israel.[268] Lamentations blames Israel for the destruction. Jerusalem sinned grievously and as a result became filthy (Lam 1:8a). The *divine agent of destruction* is Yahweh himself, portrayed as a divine warrior who sent an enemy invasion in accord with his unchangeable plan.[269] As a result of Yahweh's decree *destruction* is at every turn. The city and its environs become desolate and are haunted by wild animals (Lam 5:18), punished like that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lam 4:6), and taunted by passers by (2:15–16). Likewise, the city gates, walls and buildings have all been decimated.[270] The sanctuary has been invaded and its treasures plundered,[271] making it like a garden hut.[272] The people of Jerusalem are piled like corpses in the midst of the city,[273] and others experience famine and exile.[274] Israel's social, religious, and political customs have undergone major upheavals.[275] The *weeping goddess* so popular in the laments is obviously not mentioned in Israelite tradition. Instead the weeping city appears as a reflex. As a result of all the destruction *personified Jerusalem weeps* in the night and suffers bitterly as she mourns her loss,[276] *lamentation* fills the city; even its elders and young maidens sit in stunned silence (Lam 2:10–11).[277] Another stark contrast between the historical city laments and Lamentations pertains to the last feature of *restoration*. In the Mesopotamian laments the restoration and return of the deities to their shrines represent the hope of the poet, something especially visible in NL where restoration encompasses half of the lament. Lamentations, however, provides no such hope;[278] although it remains tentative, this contrast is something Dobbs-Allsopp attributes to different purposes between Lamentations and that of the city laments proper.[279]

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[266] Ibid., 31.
[267] See also Lam 1:1a; 2:1c, 6c, 7a, 8a; 5:20, 22a.
[268] See also Lam 1:5b; 2:14a; 3:42; 4:13; 5:7, 16.
[269] Lam 1:5b; 2:1–9a; Lam 2:7, 17, 22; 4:12; Lam 2:17a.
[270] Lam 1:4b; 2:2a–b, 5b, 8a, 9a.
[271] Lam 1:10a–b.
[272] Lam 2:6a.
[273] Lam 1:15a.
[274] Lam 4:5, 9a, 20; 1:5c, 18c; 2:9b.
[275] Lam 1:4a–b, 10; 2:6–7, 9c, 14.
[276] Lam 1:2a, 4c, 8c, 16a, 17a, 21a; 2:18–19.
[277] See also Lam 1:1, 4, 11a; 2:5c; 3:48–51; 5:15.
[278] It is possible that Lam 4:22 alludes to restoration.
[279] Dobbs-Allsop, *Weep*, 94.

From these observations it becomes clear that Dobbs-Allsopp offers convincing evidence that Lamentations shares features typically associated with the Mesopotamian genre. Likewise, he carefully notes any obvious differences and accounts for them on the basis of cultural peculiarities or the process of adaptation.[280] As a result of the appearance of features in the biblical book that are both similar to and different from Mesopotamian laments, he determines it sufficient evidence to postulate a city lament genre existed in Israel.[281] Instead of interpreting the close resemblances between the city laments and Lamentations as evidence of a direct literary influence between the two cultures, Dobbs-Allsopp accounts for the similarities *and* differences by stating that they are only generically related.[282] To him there is no need to suppose, as does Gwaltney, a direct literary link. Thus, Israel upheld a literary tradition that contained a city lament genre native to herself, one independent and distinct from Mesopotamia.[283]

Ritual Use/Cultic Setting of Lamentations

Scholars offer two possible cultic settings for the use of Lamentations in Israel. Gwaltney argues that the Lamentations were used as part of the foundation-razing ceremony prior to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple at the end of the sixth century B.C., thus, after the exile.[284] The basis for his idea comes specifically from Jer 41:5 and Zech 7:3–5, 8:19. From these texts it is clear that during the years of exile, in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months, the people conducted mournful fasts commemorating the loss of their city, walls and temple.[285] He then attempts to recreate the expected scenario at the time of Cyrus's decree in 539 B.C.:

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[280] Ibid., 95–96.
[281] Ibid., 97–156.
[282] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 157–163.
[283] Ibid., 156–163. Both Gwaltney and Dobbs-Allsopp, along with their respective questions, evidence, and differing conclusions, essentially represent a response to the doubts raised by Thomas McDaniel concerning an "alleged Sumerian influence" on biblical Lamentations (McDaniel, "Alleged Sumerian Influence," 198–209). McDaniel (199) denies the claims first made by S. N. Kramer that biblical Lamentations was influenced by the Sumerian Lamentations. The Hebrew poets are not in any way indebted to the Sumerian poets of the laments. Instead he asserts, "At most the indebtedness would be the *idea* of a lamentation over a beloved city. But since there is such a natural corollary to individual and collective lamentations or funeral laments, indebtedness may properly be discarded" (McDaniel, "Alleged Sumerian Influence, 209). For Kramer's views see, "Sumerian Literature and the Bible," (AnBib 12; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1959), 201. Consult also C. J. Gadd, "The Second Lamentation for Ur," in *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver* (eds. D. W. Thomas and W.D. McHardy; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 59–71; and H. J. Kraus, *Klagelieder* (*BKAT*; NeukirchenVluyn: Neukirchener, 1968), 10.
[284] Gwaltney, "Biblical Book," 210.
[285] Ibid.

> Exiles, including priests from Babylonia familiar with long practiced Mesopotamian liturgies for re-building demolished shrines, joined with their brothers who had been left behind "these 70 years" to live within sight of the ruins and to fast and mourn among the temple ruins. Together they bewailed the fallen sanctuary as clearing the site began in preparation for reconstruction. Such an occasion would provide a fit setting for the recitation of Lamentations and could have provided the impetus for writing or editing these five lament-poems for the performance.[286]

However, both Hillers and Dobbs-Allsopp object to Gwaltney's historical reconstruction in their respective commentaries on Lamentations since no direct evidence of their liturgical use at the end of the sixth century is available.[287] Of note, more precisely, are Dobbs-Allsopp's observations which seriously challenge Gwaltney's scenario.[288] Because Lamentations fails to mention the restoration of Jerusalem and the return of Yahweh to his shrine, he comments:

> These are not only prominent motifs in the Mesopotamian city laments, they represent these laments' raison d'etre, which is, after all, to look forward ultimately to the restoration and re-building of city and temple, and the resumption of normalcy for the larger community. The importance of these motifs can be seen by the fact that they comprise over half the "Nippur Lament." The exception proves the rule.[289]

Furthermore, there are allusions to Lamentations in Isaiah 40–55 which dates to the middle of the sixth century. Therefore, Dobbs-Allsopp cautions it is more appropriate to take Jeremiah 41:5 and Zechariah 7:3–5, 8:19 and think in terms of the kinds of public mourning ceremonies that took place *during* the exile.[290] The five poems of Lamentations would have been incorporated into such ceremonies.

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[286] Ibid., 210.
[287] Hillers, *Lamentations*, 35; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*: *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 10–12.
[288] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 10.
[289] Ibid., 10.
[290] Ibid., 12.

CITY LAMENT FEATURES IN THE ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS (AND ISRAEL AND JUDAH)

In 1959 Kramer suggested that "there is little doubt that … "the biblical book of Lamentations *as well as* the 'burden' laments of the prophets represent a profoundly moving transformation of the more formal and conventional Mesopotamian prototype."[291] Scholars since have been slow to explore this possible transformation of the city lament as they take shape in the oracles against the nations. It was not until four decades later when writing on Lamentations that Hillers broached the idea again.[292] In the revised version of his commentary he states,

> Lamentations seems to draw also on the tradition of "laments of the individual" attested in the Psalms and on other currents of native Israelite literature, and yet another stream may feed into this work. We seem to have in the prophetic oracles concerning foreign nations, and also those concerning Israel and Judah, indirect attestations of a city lament tradition within Israel running as far back as the earliest prophetic writings of the 8th century B.C.E.[293]

Although commentators in general have observed the close parallels between the oracles against the nations and Lamentations, Dobbs-Allsopp's work gives substance to Hillers' idea that the oracles (including Israel and Judah) may testify to a city lament tradition in Israel. Beyond Lamentations, Dobbs-Allsopp examines some oracles against the nations in light of city lament features. More specifically, when he compares these biblical texts against the nine city lament features, he understands these types of oracles to contain an "incomplete repertoire of the genre's features."[294] What he means by an incomplete repertoire is that these oracles are not necessarily indicative of the lament genre itself because all nine diagnostic features are not fully present, as in the book of Lamentations. Instead, the oracles against the nations exhibit the city lament "mode" because one can identify a clustering or large number of generic features in those texts. The degree to which a text has been modified by the lament genre depends upon

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[291] The Mesopotamian prototype refers to the city laments. Kramer, "Sumerian Literature and the Bible," 201.
[292] Hillers, *Lamentations*, 35.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid., 126.

the accumulation of the features. Hence, a text that contains a large number of the genre's features is designated as a "comprehensive modulation."[295]

Dobbs-Allsopp cites an apt example of comprehensive modulation in oracles concerning Judah and Jerusalem from Jer 4–6, 8–10.[296] The *subject matter* of Judah's destruction surfaces in about ten places within these cycles of poems.[297] *Poetic techniques* such as *qinah* meter and, particularly, shifts in authorial point of view so prevalent in the city laments occur throughout these chapters of Jeremiah.[298] Yahweh is clearly the *divine agent of destruction*.[299] The execution of his word and plan has caused irrevocable destruction.[300] Nothing but *divine abandonment* persists in Zion.[301] Likewise, there are substantial references to the *destruction* of the city,[302] its environs,[303] the sanctuary,[304] and people.[305] The personified city, a surrogate for the *weeping goddess*, is noticeable in Jer 4:19–21, 8:18–23, 10:19–21. *Lamentation* surfaces in Jer 4:8 and 9:16–21. Although outside the cycle of poems just discussed, Dobbs-Allsopp does note references to *restoration* in Jer 31:4–5, 21–22.[306] Thus, according to his categorization, these six chapters of Jeremiah exhibit eight out of the nine city lament features (*assignment of responsibility* is missing) qualifying it as a comprehensive modulation of the city lament genre.

When a text contains fewer features or only a single feature Dobbs-Allsopp considers it a moderate or a local modulation respectively.[307] As an illustration of moderate modulation from the oracles against the nations he cites Ezek 26:15–18 (against Tyre), Ezek 27:1–11 (Tyre) and Ezek 32:1–16 (Egypt). These three dirges are composed in *qinah* meter, the *poetic technique* found in most of Lamentations. And it is these "three places in the book that indicate the prophet knew of the genre."[308] Furthermore, Ezek

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[295] Ibid., 100–122, 134–142. He suggests six oracles: Isa 15:1–16:14; Jer 48:1–47; Isa 47:1–15; Jer 50:1–51:58; Isa 23:1–14; Zeph 2:13–15, and two oracles about Israel and Judah, Mic 1:2–16; Jer 4–6, 8–10.
[296] Ibid., 137–142. The verses highlighted below derive, once again, from Dobbs-Allsopp's list.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Jer 8:14; 4:28.
[301] Jer 8:19.
[302] Jer 9:10.
[303] Jer 6:25.
[304] Jer 4:20; 10:20.
[305] Jer 14:18.
[306] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 140–141.
[307] Ibid., 122–148. See Isa 13:1–22; Jer 46:14–24; 49:1–6; Ezek 26:15–18; 27:1–11, 26–36; 32:1–16; Nah 2:4–14; 3:1–7; Jer 49:23–27; 46:3–12; Isa 14:28–32 for the OAN (122–134). Concerning Israel and Judah: Isa 22:1–14; Amos 5:1–3,16–17,18–21; Isa 1:7–9; 3:25–4:1 (142–148).
[308] Ibid., 128.

8:1–11:23 vividly portrays Yahweh's *abandonment* of his shrine in Jerusalem. His anger towards Jerusalem results in the city's destruction and exile of its population.[309] Thus, since these passages display just two of the nine generic features, Dobbs-Allsopp designates Ezekiel as a moderate modulation of the Israelite lament mode.[310]

Dobbs-Allsopp continues to note that this generic modulation in the oracles against the nations reflects creative usage by the poet.[311] The Hebrew poets used the city lament *mode* and not the *full generic repertoire* to give texture and design to their materials. For Dobbs-Allsopp these oracles developed in relation to the city lament genre and represent further evidence that the genre existed in Israel.[312] His conclusions confirm Hillers' notion and initial evidence that the existence of city lament features not only in Lamentations but also in other Israelite literature testifies to the likelihood that Israel possessed a city lament, a tradition that was internalized prior to the eight century.[313]

Ritual Use/Cultic Setting of Laments in the Oracles against the Nations

With respect to the oracles against the nations, the question of how the city lament functioned or was used is not clear. Given the state of the current research on the oracles against the nations, the tentative theory offered by Dobbs-Allsopp must suffice.[314] On analogy with funeral dirges where there is a movement from lament to invective he comments, "This use of the city-lament genre to rebuke or mock nations perceived by Israel to be responsible for Jerusalem's destruction could be explained as a further extension of the lament-to-invective movement found in funeral dirges and some city laments."[315] That this remains a suggestion seems clear enough. Not all the oracles against the nations can be accounted for as developments of the city lament genre since one does not find city lament features in all the oracles against the nations.[316]

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[309] Ibid., 48.
[310] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 126.
[311] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 29.
[312] He makes another observation relative to the oracles against the nations. Upon close examination of the use of the city lament genre in these oracles, one finds at times an ironic twist. In its modulated form it "celebrates rather than mourns the destruction of foreign cities and nations." See Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 10; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 160.
[313] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 100–143.
[314] With respect to the placement and function of the oracles against the nations in Ezekiel, I will offer another possibility below.
[315] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 161.
[316] Ibid.

CITY LAMENT FEATURES IN PSALMS

In order to strengthen his own conclusions about an Israelite lament genre, Dobbs-Allsopp also probes a few of Israel's Psalms, but in a cursory way, for city lament features.[317] In so doing he paved the way for further analysis in the Psalms. Although he arrives at different conclusions from Dobbs-Allsopp, it is Bouzard who examines city lament features in Israel's communal laments.[318] By utilizing Dobbs-Allsopp's features, he inquires concerning the lines of correspondence between Pss 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83 and 89 with those of the first millennium *balags* and *eršemmas*.[319] Although he devotes his attention to the *eršemmas* and *balags* due to their chronological continuity with Israel's communal laments, he does not exclude the historical laments given their thematic similarity.[320] His investigation reveals that no single Psalm contains all the city lament features. But a number of consistent features do appear throughout the communal lament corpus.[321] For example, the *subject and mood* of these seven Psalms is grim. They describe defeat by a foreign army.[322] Various *poetic techniques* are employed, the most obvious being a shift in speakers,[323] along with *lists* of country names that appear in various places.[324] Mainly through rhetorical questions such as "O God, why do you cast us off for ever"[325] or "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'"[326] Bouzard observes *divine abandonment*.[327] *Assignment of responsibility* lies with God alone. He is the driving force of the destruction.[328] With the exception of Ps 83:7–9 the *divine agent of destruction* is primarily an unidentified foreign invader.[329]

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[317] Ibid., 154–155. For Dobbs-Allsopp it is the widespread occurrence of the genre in Israelite literature that causes him to conclude, "one would have to make the improbable supposition that several different writers (i.e., poets and prophets) had access to and chose to borrow from one or more of the Mesopotamian laments over a period of at least two hundred years" (157).

[318] Bouzard, *Sources*, 101–146.

[319] On account of style, theme and structural elements, these seven Psalms are designated as the best examples of Israel's communal laments by Murray Joseph Haar, "The God-Israel Relationship in the Community Lament Psalms," (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1995), 94–98. On this basis, Bouzard conducts his investigation.

[320] A practice also followed by Dobbs-Allsopp.

[321] With the material that ensues, I have followed Bouzard's observations whereby he lists various Psalms that illustrate the city lament features (Bouzard, *Sources*, 127–145). From his list, I have judiciously chosen a few Psalms in order to aid the discussion.

[322] Pss 44:9–17, 22, 25; 60:1–3; 79:1–3.

[323] Ps 44:5–7 has an unnamed speaker; the speech of the enemy is found in Pss 74:8; 79:10; 83:5, 13.

[324] Pss 60:8–10; 83:7–10; 83:10–12.

[325] Ps 74:1.

[326] Ps 79:10.

[327] See also Pss 79:5; 74:11; 44:9.

[328] Pss 44:10–11; 60:12; 74:19; 79:4–5; 80:5, 11; 89:39–42.

[329] Pss 44:9–17, 22, 25; 60:10–11; 79:1–3.

Bouzard suggests that another agent of destruction is the storm of God found in Ps 83.[330] Yahweh permits the invaders and his tempest to attack and prevail over Israel. *Destruction* is at every turn in these Psalms. With respect to the city and its environs, Ps 60:3–4 shows earthquakes causing fissures in the ground and fortifications that have crumbled.[331] Wild animals dwell where humans once did.[332] The sanctuary has not only been plundered but ruthlessly hacked into pieces by the enemy.[333] The people experience slaughter,[334] their dead bodies are preyed upon by wild beasts,[335] and some people are captured and exiled.[336] All of Israel's religious activities cease as a result of the destruction.[337] Although the *weeping goddess* is a main feature in Mesopotamian lament literature, this is not the case in the Psalms. Rather, the Psalmist, like the *weeping goddess* of the city laments, takes on the role of petitioning God to awake from his sleep, look upon the disaster,[338] and to return to his sanctuary.[339] With respect to the *weeping goddess* feature Bouzard, like Dobbs-Allsopp, mentions Ezekiel. In the vision of abandonment, particularly with reference to Ezek 8:14 where women are weeping the Tammuz, Bouzard states, "Ezekiel provides evidence that Judah was acquainted not only with the subject matter of 1st millennium *balags* but also with the dominant motif of the weeping goddess which pervades the *balags and eršemmas*."[340] These Psalms incorporate two more features. Cries of *lamentation* are heard when the Psalmist cries out "How long" or "O God why?"[341] And finally, Bouzard addresses the *restoration* feature. However, the closest thing to restoration one finds in this collection of Psalms is the psalmist's prayer for restoration, that the enemy be defeated, and that the people be delivered and order restored.[342]

As a result of the appearance of the features in these seven Psalms,[343] Bouzard's conclusions differ significantly from Dobbs-Allsopp's. Rather than arguing for a generic relationship between like literatures of two distinct cultures as does Dobbs-Allsopp, Bouzard sees a strong literary

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[330] Bouzard, *Sources*, 132.
[331] Pss 80:13; 89:39.
[332] Pss 44:20; 74:20; 80:13.
[333] Pss 74 and 79.
[334] Pss 44:23; 79:10.
[335] Pss 74:19; 79:2–4.
[336] Pss 44:12–13; 79:11.
[337] Ps 74:7–9.
[338] Pss 44:24, 26; 74:22.
[339] Ps 79:3–4.
[340] Bouzard, *Sources*, 91.
[341] Pss 79:5; 74:1.
[342] Bouzard, *Sources*, 142.
[343] On the use of city lament features found in Ps 78:59–66 see, E. Greenstien, "A Lament on the Destruction of a City and a Sanctuary in Ancient Israelite Literature," in *Homage to Shmuel* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2001), 88–97. Consult also Deborah J. Spink, "A City-Lament Genre in the Psalms of Solomon" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 2001).

influence between Israelite and Mesopotamian traditions in his analysis of the communal laments.[344] He accounts for the similarities and differences due to the expected creative adoption principle of the genre for the Israelite milieu.[345]

Ritual Use/Cultic Setting of Communal Lament Psalms

Bouzard's study reveals that the communal laments did not originate only in the exilic period. On the basis of the principles of literary adoption and adaptation he refers to ample biblical testimony for specific occasions, before 586 B.C., when Israel might have appropriated these literary principles. Temple plunders and renovations as well as public fasts and mourning constituted Israelite worship in both exilic and post-exilic times. For this reason, as well as the sufficient amount of common features that the communal laments share with the *balags* and *eršemmas,* he concludes that Israel's use of communal laments would not have been altogether different. He suggests that Israel employed these laments with the hope that Yahweh would spare them of disaster and protect against its onslaught.[346] Bouzard's point is well noted and will be taken up later in the discussion regarding Ezekiel.

CITY LAMENT FEATURES IN PROPHETIC LITERATURE

The Book of Micah

The more recent article by J. Rilett Wood furthers the discussion of the city laments in the Hebrew Bible.[347] She, like Bouzard, utilizes Dobbs-Allsopp's nine generic features to argue for city lament features in Micah. She departs from Dobbs-Allsopp, however, by the manner in which she applies the features to Micah, something of interest for the present study. She conducts her analysis on the basis of the whole prophetic book of Micah rather than at the level of individual oracles or a cluster of oracles. Thus, in her observation of city lament features in Micah, she obviously goes beyond what Dobbs-Allsopp articulated concerning Mic 1:2–16,

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[344] Ibid., 211; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 157–163.
[345] Bouzard, *Sources*, 202–203, 15–52. Within this framework he states, "literary borrowing frequently included redactional activities whereby material was either added or deleted in order that a given text might better accommodate a local culture, that culture's ideology, and its religious beliefs. Evidence for the literary influence of Mesopotamia on Israel not only tolerates some differences in the respective laments but expects them" (Bouzard, *Sources*, 203–204). Furthermore, due to a lengthy historical involvement between the two cultures, the lament tradition of Mesopotamia could have been introduced to Israel (202).
[346] Bouzard, *Sources*, 208.
[347] J. Rilett Wood, "Speech and Action in Micah's Prophecy," *CBQ* 62 (2000): 645–662.

namely, that it represents a comprehensive modulation of the city lament.[348] The following summary highlights her observations on Micah chapters 2–7.[349]

In Mic 2:1–11 the *subject and mood* of lamenting continues but in reference to the wrongful actions of the city's citizens and the evil schemes of the rich.[350] Again, as with Lamentations, this represents a contrast with the historical city laments. *Structure and poetic techniques* are noticeable in the chapter, especially in the interchange of speakers between Micah and the problematic citizens of Jerusalem. In this way, the poet Micah becomes involved in the action, something reminiscent of the city laments (see above). On account of Israel's sins they experience *divine abandonment* which results in societal devastation at every level.[351] Mic 3:12 reflects such devastation with respect to the religious enterprise, "Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, the mountain of the house a wooded height." The *destruction* of Jerusalem and its temple is similar to images of destruction found in the city laments. Mic 6:9–7:9 details how the entire fabric of Israelite society has deteriorated. Especially affected are the city's leaders who are incapable of exercising just leadership. Likewise, common citizens have resorted to unrighteous interactions with one another.[352] Yahweh and his word are *assigned responsibility* for the destruction[353] and his *agent of destruction*, like the communal laments in the Psalms, is an unidentified nation.[354] Weeping and *lamentation* are throughout the book. In Mic 1:8–9 the prophet grieves over Samaria's wounds just as the Sumerian poet wails the destruction of Ur.[355] Likewise, the *weeping goddess* motif appears in its reflex of the personified city bemoaning its fate.[356] Mic 7:1 also shows personified Jerusalem lamenting in a similar way to the weeping goddess of the laments. Rilett Wood's point is insightful (and will have import for what follows in Ezekiel) with respect to the *restoration* feature and how it compares to the city laments. She suggests, and rightfully so, that the salvation oracle articulated by lady Jerusalem (Mic 7:8–9) reflects restoration but as an event yet to happen.[357] In NL, however, lady Nippur expresses her restoration as a fulfilled prophecy by concluding with the

[348] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 134.
[349] Again, out of necessity, and in keeping with earlier practices, I have relied on her verse selection in Micah to illustrate the features.
[350] Mic 2:1–2.
[351] Mic 3:4.
[352] Mic 7:2–3.
[353] Mic 1:12, 13–16.
[354] Lam 1:15.
[355] LU 65–74.
[356] Mic 1:10a, 11a, 11b–12.
[357] Rilett Wood, "Speech and Action," 661.

statement "that Enlil has relented, has taken pity on her and has commanded the restoration of the city."[358]

Unlike Gwaltney, Dobbs-Allsopp, and Bouzard who approach city lament parallels in the Bible as an opportunity to probe the question of literary borrowing or dependency, Rilett Wood removes herself from this historical level of questioning. She makes no claims denying or supporting literary dependency. Instead, she asserts that the nature of her comparison concerns the literary level.[359] She interprets the resemblances between Micah and the city laments as evidence of "the persistence and adaptability of the city lament."[360] It is agreed that the appearance of city lament features in Micah certainly reflects the longevity of the genre. But the value of Rilett Wood's literary comparison void of historical implications seems questionable as does her proposed use of the city lament in Micah.[361]

Jeremiah 25:30–38

Under the rubric of prophetic literature discussed presently, Bouzard's work is noteworthy for more than just his insights on the Israel's communal laments and their relationship to the *balags* and *eršemmas*. He brings to the table Jer 25:30–38, a passage overlooked by Dobbs-Allsopp, as corroborating evidence for his thesis that Judah was acquainted with lament literature. He asserts that these verses in Jeremiah contain lament features even though the passage is a judgment oracle.[362] As such it should not be expected that the oracle will contain all the features typically found in the communal laments.[363] Bouzard enumerates four lament features in Jer 25:30–38.[364] If one follows Dobbs-Allsopp's rendering, the text would qualify as a moderate or local modulation of the lament genre because it

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[358] NL 135–137.
[359] Rilett Wood, "Speech and Action," 647.
[360] Ibid., 662.
[361] Rilett Wood has a creative take on the use of the city lament in Micah. Because Micah shares features of the city lament, and because scholars typically understand the various speakers in the laments as evidence for use in ritual drama, she understands Micah, with all of its grammatical inconsistencies, as performance poetry ("Speech and Action," 649–650). She contends, however, that the drama is seen throughout the book and not just in two isolated chapters and that the drama that unfolds in its pages was performed in front of a live audience (649). Therefore, according to Rilett Wood's scheme, Micah's poetic drama contains six scenes with three main actors. The "exact occasion" is a city gathering for the autumn festival in celebration of the sowing, harvest and vintage (649). Attendants to such a festival would be various groups of professional poets as well as individual poets like Amos or Micah. The festival's goal "was to strengthen the mutual bonds of the citizenry by critically assessing the various groups" (649).
[362] Bouzard, *Sources*, 185.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid., 187–198. Again, I follow his observations for these verses in Jeremiah in the ensuing discussion.

contains fewer features. The *agent(s) of destruction* are represented by Yahweh's tempest (*saʿar*) and the roar (*šāʾag*) of his voice in verses 32 and 30 respectively.[365] *Assignment of responsibility* for the impending destruction lies with Yahweh's anger. His fierce anger is mentioned two times in verses 37–38. As a result, verse 31 reports Yahweh's *rîb* against the nations.[366] And like the laments, no particular reason is offered for Yahweh's indictment and ensuing destructive storm if one does not consider the broader context of the oracle. Descriptions of *destruction* are elaborated mainly in verse 33 when the unburied slain are so numerous that they fill the earth from one end to the other. But one can see the devastation on the shepherds and their sheepfold in verses 36–37 and how it has led to cries for help.[367] And finally Jer 25:38 highlights *divine abandonment* when it is said that, like a lion, Yahweh leaves his *sukkô* or his covert.[368] Thus, there seems to be adequate evidence from Jer 25:30–38, the book of Micah, and a selection of the oracles against the nations to agree with scholars concerning the preponderance of lament features in Israelite prophetic literature.

SUMMARY

In sum, four blocks of Israelite literature were analyzed, namely, the poems of Lamentations, the oracles against the nations, seven of Israel's communal laments, and some prophetic literature including the book of Micah. We have seen that city laments and their accompanying features have sufficiently been observed and interpreted by scholars throughout the corpus even though approaches vary in accounting for the features in Israelite literature. Methodologically, the investigation in chapter two has also shown how Dobbs-Allsopp's application of the features in Lamentations has become the springboard for others to advance comparisons with biblical texts beyond Lamentations. Likewise, these scholars culled evidence from both the historical city laments as well as the *balags* and *eršemmas* for comparison with first millennium biblical texts. This study is no exception. The nine distinctive features articulated by Dobbs-Allsopp, *subject and mood*, *structure and poetic technique*, *divine abandonment*, *the divine*

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[365] Ibid., 187.
[366] Ibid., 188.
[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid., 190. In addition to Jer 25, Bouzard addresses Joel 2:15–17 as an additional prophetic text possibly proving his thesis. He suggests that the first two chapters of Joel might be understood as a "single lament liturgy" revealing that the author had familiarity with the lament tradition in Mesopotamia. For his tentative lines of evidence, see Bouzard, *Sources*, 209–210. He also makes a stand with respect to the highly debated speaking voice in Jer 10:17–25. He argues for a reading in verses 19–25 of the feminine city's lament as opposed to Jeremiah's or Yahweh's. In so doing he is making the obvious connection between the weeping goddess in the laments with the weeping city in the Hebrew bible (Bouzard, *Sources*, 182).

agent of destruction, *destruction*, *assignment of responsibility*, *the weeping goddess*, *lamentation*, and *restoration of the city and return of the Gods* forms the basis for yet another literary comparison between the Mesopotamian laments and Israelite literature, namely, with the book of Ezekiel. To my knowledge no one has applied these features to the entire book of Ezekiel and noted their importance for interpreting it.

To their credit both Dobbs-Allsopp and Bouzard[369] recognize lament features in Ezekiel. As noted above, both address Ezekiel in their respective studies on the city lament in Israel by acknowledging his familiarity with lament subject matter, yet neither takes the comparison far enough. The problem with what Dobbs-Allsopp and Bouzard suggest concerning Ezekiel's oracles is that all of the nine city lament features can be accounted for in the book, not merely the three they suggest. Basically, I am arguing that Ezekiel possesses the full generic repertoire and, perhaps, does so more fully than Lamentations given the elaboration of the restoration feature (so similar to NL) in Ezek 33–48. The ideas and features associated with city laments appear to percolate to the surface of the whole book of Ezekiel, not simply of select passages reflecting the feature of *divine abandonment* (Ezek 8–11), the *weeping goddess* (Ezek 8:14), and the *poetic technique* of *qînāh* meter (Ezek 26:17, 27:2, 32:16).[370] In fact, Ezekiel seems to be using the genre more extensively than Dobbs-Allsopp suggests. Ezekiel might be more than just a "moderate modulation of the city lament mode," as he proposed.[371] I would like to suggest that it is entirely possible that the lament genre is reflected in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel could represent a prophetic reuse of the ancient city lament genre.

This, of course, begs the question of how this might have occurred. From the previous discussion, it seems clear that, at least, a few scholars think Ezekiel possessed knowledge of the genre. Given Ezekiel's geographical proximity to Nippur, the precise locale of one of the historical city laments, familiarity with the city lament genre is all the more comprehendible, it could also allow for some type of literary dependency. It is not completely clear, however, if literary borrowing or even generic similarities best explains the appearance of these features in the book. In fact, the thrust of my discussion does not set out to disprove Dobbs-Allsopp's thesis, but neither does it argue for literary dependency in the manner following Bouzard or Gwaltney.[372] While I consent to Ezekiel's general awareness of the genre, the manner in which I would account for lament features in his

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[369] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 126–128; Bouzard, *Sources*, 91.

[370] Rilett Wood leveled the same criticism of Dobbs-Allsopp with respect to his approach in Micah. Rather than address the entire book, he observes only individual oracles in Micah (Rilett Wood, "Speech and Action," 647).

[371] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 126.

[372] Although arguing for a generic relationship seems easier, one should not rule out the possibilities of literary dependence. Admittedly, both suggestions have their difficulties.

book commences elsewhere. Perhaps the scroll that Ezekiel was commanded to eat, a scroll containing lamentation, mourning, and woe (Ezek 2:8–3:3) best accounts for the appearance of lament elements in the book. Chapters three through six explore these possibilities.

CHAPTER THREE: UNDERSTANDING EZEKIEL'S ROLE IN LIGHT OF THE GENRE OF THE MCL: THE SCROLL INCIDENT

INTRODUCTION

The scroll incident is an intriguing account in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 2:8–3:3). Regardless of certain affinities with Jeremiah's mission to King Jehoiakin (Jer 36:1–32), the command to take, and eat the scroll remains unparalleled in the biblical text. It seems to add to his multifaceted role established throughout the book. Ezekiel is portrayed as Israel's prophet,[373] watchman,[374] sign,[375] judge[376] and funeral director.[377] He comes from priestly stock,[378] is Yahweh's *ben ʾādām*, "son of adam,"[379] and a married exile.[380] As indicated by these multifaceted portrayals, Ezekiel has different functional identities in the book.

Perhaps a less evident portrayal, but one firmly established on account of the scroll incident is Ezekiel's role as a mourner. It appears that he is the figure that complains and mourns over Yahweh's decision to destroy Jerusalem not unlike the weeping goddess in the laments. In some contexts, Ezekiel even seems to take on characteristics of the Mesopotamian literary figure but, admittedly, is distinct from her. In this manner, the scroll incident is crucial because it thematically connects Ezekiel to the weeping goddess which, in turn, connects him to the city lament. Moreover, the scroll is crucial because, as will be argued below, its content anticipates aspects of Ezekiel's book and, perhaps, alludes to an embedded sub-genre. With this as a possibility neither literary borrowing nor a generic relationship with the Mesopotamian material would best account for city lament features in Ezekiel. The scroll, instead, could offer a primary rationale. This chapter examines the scroll incident and Ezekiel's response to it as the main line of evidence reflecting his role as mourner. It also considers corroborating evidence (his watchman role, confinement, speechlessness, and his dramatic performance as the city under siege) that together with the scroll appears significant for an enhanced understanding of the prophet.

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[373] Ezek 2:5; 33:33.
[374] Ezek 3:17; 33:7.
[375] Ezek 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27 (with *môpēt*).
[376] Ezek 20:4; 22:2.
[377] Ezek 19:1 (for the kings of Judah); Ezek 27:1–11, 26–36; 28:11 (for Tyre); Ezek 32:1 (for Pharoah).
[378] Ezek 1:3. The Hebrew here is not clear. Perhaps *hakkōhēn* "the priest" refers to Ezekiel's father, Buzi, and not Ezekiel.
[379] Ezek 2:1. The designation is found ninety-three times in the book with reference to the prophet. H. Haag, "*ben ʾādām*," *TDOT* 2: 159–165.
[380] Ezek 24:15–24 (married); 1:1–3; 3:11, 15 (exile).

THE SCROLL INCIDENT (EZEKIEL 2:8–3:3) *mĕgillat sēper*

Ezekiel is the unfortunate recipient of the devastating news of destruction decreed on Jerusalem by the executive decision of Yahweh (Ezek 1–5). Ezekiel can do nothing to stop the decree (Ezek 2:8–3:3) in spite of subsequent supplications to the contrary (Ezek 9:8; 11:13). He has been forced to abandon Jerusalem, forsake his services to the temple as priest, and become an exile in a land not his own (Ezek 1:1–3). As a result, he bitterly grieves the loss of his people, temple, and city (Ezek 3:14–15). Generally speaking, aspects of Ezekiel's opening chapters place the prophet in a similar literary context to that of the weeping goddess.[381] However, Ezekiel's "lament-like role" and the book he produced as a result, is specifically evidenced by the scroll incident.

The scroll incident is enveloped by vision, mission, and caution. On the heels of an incredible vision of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh (Ezek 1:28a), and after he hears a voice speaking to him designating him "son of Adam," God assigns a mission to Ezekiel. His mission concerns communicating with the rebellious nation (Ezek 2:3–4) whether they listen or not (Ezek 2:5). Even before the mission gets underway Yahweh cautions Ezekiel that he must not be rebellious (Ezek 2:8a), and that acceptance of Yahweh's "menu" will serve as his test of obedience. God hands Ezekiel a scroll (Ezek 2:9), spreads it before him so that he can read it (Ezek 2:10), at which time he sees it is written on both sides (Ezek 2:10). Upon reading the scroll, the prophet proceeds to ingest the document, an act demonstrating his obedience (Ezek 3:2–3). In general terms, the scroll functions as a test for Ezekiel. The incident, however, appears to be more than just a test of obedience. Both the description of the scroll and Ezekiel's response to it are indicators. With respect to the former, the text highlights the fixed nature of the scroll, its clear content, and its edible nature.

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[381] The "weeping goddess" as coined by Kramer ("Weeping Goddess," 69–80) debuts in Sumerian lament literature over destroyed cities. She is the unfortunate recipient of the devastating news of destruction decreed on Sumer by the executive decision of Enlil. Even though she appears as a suppliant to the divine council, she is unable to stop the decree and is forced to abandon her city, forsake her temple, and become a foreigner in a land not her own on account of the destruction. As a result, she bitterly grieves the loss of her people, temple, and city (LU 80–85, 108–109, 137–172, 252a–327, 247, 299–301; *balag* 1:46–63; 2b+61–75; 3:18, c+65–74; 4:177–195, b+257–260; 7:b+160–168; 20:g+111–120; 43a+62–94, 58–119, c+239–251, g+338ff; 48:1–21; 50:a+42–86, b+186–232, 233–243; *eršemmas* 32; 79; 106; 159; 166:1, 2; 10).

The Scroll's Threefold Description

Its Fixed Nature

Two important textual indicators reveal the fixed nature of the scroll. First, the scroll comes directly from Yahweh to Ezekiel. It is a divine delivery of a divine decree (Ezek 3:8–9). This alone makes the document immutable.[382] Second, the text informs the reader three times that Ezekiel receives a *written* scroll (Ezek 2:9–10), not an insignificant repetition. The fact that it is a written document indicates its fixed nature since through writing, aspects of reality are secured.[383] In addition, the writing covers the document both front and back (3:10).[384] In other words, there is no available writing space to add to what has already been inscribed. Any additions or amendments by Ezekiel or Yahweh are impossible.[385] Thus the scroll's divine origin together with the fact that it had been *fully written* upon speak of its fixed nature.[386]

Its Content

Another important aspect of the scroll is its clear content revealing the nature of Yahweh's irrevocable words. Yahweh has fixed "lamentation, mourning, and woe" as indicated by what Ezekiel initially reads (Ezek 2:9). The first term *qinîm*, is not found elsewhere in this masculine plural form although it does occur once in the expected feminine plural. In the plural it denotes a collection of written dirges, as in the laments over Josiah's death (2 Chr 35:25).[387] A *qinâh* has words and a special rhythm and was sung at times of bereavement. When Ezekiel reads *qinîm* in 2:10 it alerts him to expect not one, but a plurality of dirges. That this does, in fact, happen is witnessed by the frequency of the term *qinâh* in Ezekiel.[388]

The feminine singular noun *qinâh* meaning "dirge" or "elegy" is directly related to funerary contexts and is found a total of eight times in Ezekiel; two occurrences refer directly to Israel (Ezek 19:1, 14), and the remaining

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[382] Consider also the fixed and unchangeable nature of Enlil's word in the city laments (LU 150–151, 160–161, 168–169; LSUr 57, 365; UL 12:38).
[383] M. Odell, "You are What You Eat," *JBL* 117/2 (1998): 229–248.
[384] This is similar to the tables of the testimony in Exod 32:15.
[385] So, also, Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 124; William H. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–19* (WBC 28; Waco: Word Books, 1986), 30.
[386] Similarly, the two tablets of the testimony were God's work, and the writing was God's writing in Exod 31:18; 32:16.
[387] BDB, 884.
[388] Of the 15 occurrences of the term in the Hebrew Bible Ezekiel uses it the most lending itself to the book's somber mood.

usages refer to Tyre (Ezek 26:17; 27:2, 32; 28:12)[389] and Egypt (Ezek 32:2, 16). Thus, the repeated use of *qinâh* in Ezekiel reveals how packages of laments unfold in the subsequent material.

The second noun *hegeh* "mourning" is an unusual noun in that it appears only twice outside its use in Ezekiel (Job 37:2; Ps 90:9). It is a term which can mean "rumbling," "growling" or "moaning." Perhaps it is best to understand the noun by the cognate verb *hagah* which often depicts the cooing sound that doves make.[390] Apparently, a dove's cooing in their typically remote or destroyed dwelling places offered an apt metaphor for the moaning of God's people who were in trouble.[391] The term seems to indicate inarticulate sounds uttered at times when the death of a loved one is in view. Thus, when Ezekiel reads *hegeh* on the scroll, it suggests a moaning closely linked with suffering and grief.[392]

The final term *hî* is a hapax legomenon. Whatever one may speculate about its spelling options (as either the interjection "alas" or a form of a I-nun verb meaning "to wail") it does seem best to understand it as a noun given its juxtaposition to the other two nouns in the triad of words on the scroll. In this manner, *hî* could be understood as "an onomatopoeic expression, echoing a cry of pain" much like *hegeh*,[393] a shapeless, intoned sound of distress. When Ezekiel reads this third and final term, there is no denying the bitter nature of the scroll and what it entails.

Thus, the three Hebrew words used here are important. They are clearly words of lamentation not judgment. Indeed, Yahweh has decreed anguish and severe emotional turmoil, ongoing cries likened to death pangs on the basis of the scroll's content, a destiny that is non-negotiable. The words are in a full book written by God and entrusted to Ezekiel. In many ways the scroll (which represents Yahweh's decision) assigns responsibility to Yahweh for the destruction much like "the decision" of the divine assembly in the laments assigns responsibility to Enlil. Although both An and Enlil shoulder the responsibility, Enlil is ultimately charged with the proclamation and execution of the assembly's decision.[394] On the one hand, the scroll sets a specific and undeniable tone for Ezekiel's ministry. On the other, it seems to describe some of the contents of Ezekiel's book even if not all of it looks like a lament, a point that will be developed below when

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[389] Ezek 26:17 and 27:32 speak of the coastlands raising up a lamentation for fallen Tyre while 27:2 and 28:12 show Ezekiel raising up a lamentation for Tyre and its king respectively.

[390] Brownlee, *Ezekiel*, 30. The verb form appears 28 times, none of which are found in Ezekiel (Evan-Shoshan, 522).

[391] So, too, Bouzard, *Sources*, 192 and Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 125. See Ezek 7:16; Isa 38:14, 59:11; Nah 2:5–7 for use of the verb form.

[392] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 125.

[393] Ibid.

[394] Unlike Ezekiel, the decision to destroy in the laments is arbitrary and not motivated by human guilt. This point will be discussed below.

considering the significance of the edible nature of the scroll. Accordingly, the scroll provides Ezekiel with the main subject matter and mood. Through the scroll Yahweh proclaims his decision to destroy. The prophet Ezekiel executes Yahweh's decision, a point made evident with the requirement to eat the scroll.

Its Edible Nature

Surprisingly, the scroll is edible. Ezekiel is commanded to eat the scroll four times (2:8; 3:1 [2x], 3). Again, this is not an insignificant point. There is a progression and correlation between eating and speaking in Ezek 2:8–3:4:

a 2:8 "Listen to what I am saying to you,
Do not be rebellious like the rebellious house
Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you."

b 3:1 "eat what is offered to you
eat this scroll and go speak to the house of Israel

c 3:2 and he fed me this scroll
3:3a and he said …
Let your belly eat
And let your stomach be full of this scroll
which I am giving to you

d 3:3b and I ate it.
3:4 and he said, "Go … and speak my words."

Initially, listening and eating are connected even though the scroll is not mentioned. God asks him to eat again, and still the scroll is not mentioned. In Ezek 3:1 he is asked to eat again, but now he is to eat this scroll and … speak. God feeds him and then the final command to eat and speak closes the section. This progression shows there is a correlation between eating and speaking. Ezekiel must execute Yahweh's decision. Internalizing the scroll is equivalent to internalizing the divine message. Hence, most interpreters understand that the repeated command to eat the scroll shows at least one, if not all, of the following: Ezekiel's reception of the divine message, his obedience or disobedience, and that his message is legiti-

mate.[395] Davis proposes that eating the scroll, along with Ezekiel's muteness, points towards a shift in the prophetic tradition from oral to a written composition.[396] In other words, it represents the textual form of Ezekiel's revelation.[397] The working assumption, of course, in all of these approaches is that the scroll's content contains the prophetic message, the words Ezekiel is supposed to speak (i.e., his book).[398]

In addition to these considerations, I would like to propose that eating the scroll may point to something even more specific. As he absorbs the divine lamentation, Ezekiel is defined as the repository of laments, moaning, and wailing. Ezekiel becomes what he eats, and to make Margaret Odell's use of the cliché even more precise, he becomes a mourner as a result of eating a scroll containing lamentation, moaning and woes. That is, he becomes like the goddess who laments. What are written on the scroll are some of the words he is supposed to transmit. Thus, the scroll might be giving the textual form of his revelation lament elements, giving more of a nuance to Davis' suggestion.[399]

Although the scroll is crucial for the reasons outlined above, eating the scroll is not enough to prove Ezekiel takes on the role of mourner. However, his subsequent reaction to the incident in Ezek 3:14–15 appears to

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[395] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 78; Odell, *Ezekiel*, 44; Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel* (NAC 17; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 77–78.

[396] Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, 51.

[397] Ibid. Ellen Davis' approach should be highlighted because of how it intersects with some of the concerns of the present study. Davis contends that the book comes from the hand of Ezekiel. He is the first literary prophet. Ezekiel must fall silent and let the scroll he swallows speak. In Davis' paradigm the edible scroll represents a shift in the prophetic process from oral to written prophecy. For Davis the edible scroll *and* Ezekiel's muteness represent "the new conditions and constraints imposed upon communication by the move toward textualization of the prophetic tradition" (Ibid., 217). She is careful to observe the literary qualities of Ezekiel and, in my opinion, sufficiently explains those features which have been identified as evidence of oral delivery. Furthermore, she contends that the exilic community with its new social and religious context would have needed a "new kind of prophetic enterprise, whose locus and medium are the text" (Ibid., 38). Block has also affirmed that the scroll is "more than a metaphor of human ingestion of divine truth; it suggests a written record of the prophet's preaching" (*Ezekiel 1–24*, 20).

[398] Because of this assumption, most people see the scroll's content as incongruent with Ezekiel's preaching since his oracles are judgment in nature. This apparent conflict is resolved by another assumption. Even though Ezekiel's oracles are primarily judgment oracles they do produce or effect lamentation, mourning and woe. The scroll's content is, therefore, only the consequences or results of his preaching (Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 78*;* Allen, *Ezekiel 1–18*, 40*).* Odell challenges this view that sees the scroll incident and reception of the divine word as unified, "You are what you Eat," 242–244. She argues that Ezekiel eats the judgment itself and not the message of divine judgment (i.e. not the words of judgment). Odell admits that her interpretation resolves the "apparent conflict" between Ezekiel's message of judgment and the scroll designated as lamentation, mourning, and woe.

[399] Chapters four through six explore the possibility of city lament features in Ezekiel. In so doing, my suggestion that the scroll allows for a lament sub-genre will be further fleshed out.

confirm this idea. Likewise, observing the progression between eating and speaking in Ezek 2:8–3:4 does not necessarily provide enough evidence to connect the scroll to Ezekiel's book. However, the many lament features throughout the book seem to offer ample evidence of this.[400]

EZEKIEL'S REACTION TO THE SCROLL INCIDENT

Ezekiel Laments: Ezekiel 3:14–15

Ezekiel's reaction to the scroll incident unfolds explicitly in his first person narrative response to the divine decree, "I went bitterly, in the fury of my spirit … and I came to the exiles … and I sat there overwhelmed among them for seven days" (Ezek 3:14–15). These verses are a conclusion corresponding to the introduction in Ezek 1:1–3. At the same time they reveal how Yahweh's visitation, together with the scroll incident, affected the prophet. Ezek 3:14 describes his emotional demeanor and Ezek 3:15 mainly shows his physical posture. Together these verses represent Ezekiel's lament.

Ezekiel's emotional demeanor in Ezekiel 3:14 (mar/ḥēmâ)

Ezekiel describes himself as "bitter" and "furious," transparent statements revealing much about the prophet's psychological mindset. It is, therefore, important to unpack *mar* and *ḥēmâ* in Ezek 3:14. First he states, "I went bitterly." No other prophet but Ezekiel describes himself as "bitter." In Ezek 3:14 *mar* describes Ezekiel's disposition and is closely associated with the qualifying construct phrase *ḥămat rûḥî* "the fury of my spirit." Because of the association of *mar* with a strong term such as *ḥămat rûḥî,* it seems best to translate *mar* as "bitter". This human feeling of bitterness occurs in two other places in Ezekiel and is instructive.

Mar is also used of Ezekiel in 21:11(Eng 6). In this case, however, the prophet is commanded by Yahweh to mourn at the news of Jerusalem's fall. It is not a voluntary response. He is commanded to " sigh" or "groan" *ʾnḥ* with "bitter grief" *merîrût* on account of the tidings of destruction brought by the sword to Jerusalem (21:11). In chapter 21, *mar* is associated with a term used to describe deep grief and pain, and it represents a response to devastating news once again.

In Ezek 27:28–36 we read of Tyre's ruin. It is a lamentation with all the associated rituals. The use of *mar* in Ezek 27:28–36 reflects the mariners' and all seafaring people's disposition towards the fall of Tyre, "They wail aloud over you, and "cry bitterly" (*zāʿaq mar*). They cast dust on their heads and wallow in ashes; they make themselves bald for you, and gird

[400] Observing lament features in Ezekiel will be the focus of chapters four through six.

themselves with sackcloth, and they "weep" (*bākâ*) over you in "bitterness of soul" (*mar nepeš*), with bitter mourning (*mispēd mar*). In their wailing they raise a lamentation for you, and lament over you"… (Ezek 27:30–32a). In this text *mar* is further associated with the mourning context.

Thus in Ezekiel, two of the three occurrences of *mar* refer to Ezekiel's embittered demeanor over the bad news of destruction on Jerusalem and her people. Furthermore, all three occurrences of *mar* (or its derivatives) have a city's destruction (either Jerusalem or Tyre) as the impetus for the human emotion. All of these appear to be identifiable mourning contexts.

The use of *mar* outside Ezekiel obviously has distress and misfortune as a background for a variety of people in varied circumstances that do not include a city's end.[401] One text from this group, however, that does have a city's end in view is Lam 1:4. The poet who personifies Zion's desolation says of the city, "all her gates are desolate, her priests do sigh (*ʾnḥ*) … she herself is 'bitter' (*mar*)" (Lam 1:4). This is important because personified Zion, as either first or third person speaker, is the functional equivalent of the weeping goddess in the Hebrew Bible. Since the verse is in a book with an indisputable mourning context concerning Jerusalem's destruction, it shows how bitterness and the loss of a city can be used together.

Ezekiel also says in 3:14, "I went in … *ḥămat rûḥî* "the fury of my spirit." As with *mar* no other prophet displays such a reaction to Yahweh's command, nor is designated this way.[402] It seems evident that Ezekiel's own fury in 3:14 towards Yahweh's decree should not be conflated with Yahweh's fury towards Israel that clearly manifests itself in Ezekiel's oracles more explicitly after the divine imposition of speechlessness (Ezek 3:26–27). As a mute, Ezekiel is not supposed to express his own words or emotions, only Yahweh's.[403] But prior to his muteness the text seems to reveal Ezekiel's personal sentiments.[404]

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[401] In Amos 8:10 and Zeph 1:14 the eschatological day of destruction is designated as a "bitter" day. Likewise, Isa 38:15–17, Hezekiah's Psalm of Praise, speaks of the great bitterness Hezekiah experienced due to the oppression of his sickness. See also Jer 4:18, Ruth 1:13, 1 Sam 15:32; 22:2; Ps 64:4; Eccl 7:26.

[402] Jeremiah speaks of being filled with Yahweh's indignation in 6:11 and 15:17.

[403] A few exceptions to this are Ezek 4:14; 9:8; 11:13. These will be explained below.

[404] Contrast this with Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1–20*, 71) who suggests an ambiguity between God's sentiments with that of the prophet in this passage. By comparison note Ezekiel's voluntary response in Ezek 3:14 with commands for him to be emotional or to express emotional gestures such as clapping the hands, stomping the feet and smiting the thigh (Ezek 6:11–12; 21:12,14) with what appears to be, an intentional and legitimate conflation between Ezekiel's actions and Yahweh's wrath over Israel's abominations. Note also that in Ezek 6 & 21, the reason for anger differs from that of Ezek 3:14. That is to say, the occasion of Ezekiel's anger in 3:14 is directed at Yahweh for the distasteful decree, while the actions of Ezekiel's fury in Ezek 6 and 21 are expressions of Yahweh's own rage towards Israel's evil abominations, two entirely different settings altogether. For these reasons, it is safe to suggest that Ezekiel is expressing his own bitterness and anger in Ezek 3:14 as a result of eating the scroll.

Thus with the complete statement, "I went bitter, in the fury of my spirit," Ezekiel laments. He is telling us he is filled with strong emotions and that these feelings are consistent with the scroll he swallowed, Yahweh's divine decree. This response accords well with what is known of the weeping goddess in the city laments when she learns of Enlil's immutable decree and Sumer's destruction. As her designation reveals, she responds emotionally to the news of the divine decree of destruction in the laments. Ningal weeps out loud and she is repeatedly described as bitter.[405] In her public display of disapproval to the divine council she states, "my eye verily I poured."[406] She says that she screamed and cried for the Storm to return (LU 111). In fact, Kramer comments on Ningal's "violent emotional state" because she tears her hair out, strikes her breast and floods her eyes with tears over the destruction.[407] Ningal's passion and strong emotions towards the suffering and devastation she faced gave the weeping goddess her well deserved designation. In the liturgical laments the poets also describe the goddess as disheartened and despondent.[408] In this verse, therefore, Ezekiel's response to the scroll incident resembles the sentiment of the goddess. But it is by no means the only time.[409]

Together with Ezek 3:14, Ezek 9:8–10 and 11:13 represent corroborating evidence that Ezekiel might be taking on characteristics of the weeping goddess in response to Yahweh's decree concerning the city. Even though the mourning decree is fixed for the reasons outlined above, it is not until the vision of abandonment, Ezek 8–11, that Ezekiel appears to be crying out in supplication to Yahweh for the remnant. In chapter 9 Yahweh wants to preserve the lives of those in Jerusalem who ("moan and groan") *hanne'ĕnāḥîm wĕhanne'ĕnāqîm* over the impending doom. However, none in the city with such sentiments exists, so it seems. At the commanded execution of people without Yahweh's mark of preservation Ezekiel is deeply disturbed (Ezek 9:8–10). He falls on his face and cries out (*wā'ez'aq*) to the Lord, "Ah Lord God (*'ăhāh 'ădōnāy yhwh*) will you destroy all that remains of Israel in the outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?" Likewise, at the end of the temple vision in 11:13, at the death of Pelatiah, Ezekiel falls on his face and cries with a loud voice (*wā'ez'aq qôl-gādôl)*, and says, "Ah Lord God (*'ăhāh 'ădōnāy yhwh*) will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" Both texts utilize the verb *zā'aq* and interjection *'ăhāh*. This particular form of the interjection does not occur elsewhere in the book.[410] Its use in conjunction with *zā'aq* in Ezekiel indicates his horror relative to

[405] LU 80–85.
[406] LU 145.
[407] Kramer, "The Weeping Goddess," 71–73. Cf. LU 299–301.
[408] See chapter one.
[409] As will be demonstrated below, Ezekiel's sighs, laments, and wailings are expressed in the whole book.
[410] But see 2 Kgs 3:10 and Josh 7:7 where the interjection represents a cry of alarm.

Yahweh's wrath. Likewise, note the pattern in these instances. There is a general merciless judgment, the killing of specified people, followed by Ezekiel's protest.

Thus these two acts of supplication represent Ezekiel's attempt to avert the inevitable, and together with Ezek 3:14, show Ezekiel's mourning role (cry of alarm) not unlike the goddess. The goddess often appears as a suppliant to the divine council. Her horror and shock over the decree are demonstrated when Ningal, who with bent knee and outstretched arms, pleads to An and Enlil in the following manner, "Let Ur not be destroyed! Let not its people perish!"[411] As with Ningal, Ezekiel's pleading before Yahweh is not met with favor and the verdict for utter destruction on the city and death of the people remains firmly in tact (Ezek 9:10). Further evidence that he is lamenting appears in Ezek 3:15, a description primarily of his physical posture.

His physical posture described in Ezekiel 3:15

After expressing his deep dissatisfaction with the recent events, Ezekiel concludes by saying, "and I sat there seven days overwhelmed in their midst." The verb (*wāʾēšēb)* "I sat," the duration of time (*šibʿat yāmîm)* "seven days," and yet another notification of Ezekiel's sentiment (*mašmîm)* "overwhelmed" reveal more about his role.

The verb: *wāʾēšēb* "And I sat"

Although the text does not specify, Ezekiel is probably sitting on the ground, by the river Chebar, sitting where the exiles were established in their captivity.[412] According to mourning practices in the Bible and the ancient Near East, the ritual mourning seat is the ground.[413] Ezekiel's sitting posture, presumably on the ground, is not enough evidence on its own to suggest Ezekiel is in mourning.[414] One needs to consider the seven day duration associated with it.

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[411] LU 252a–327.

[412] The same imagery is captured in Ps 137:1–3. It was by the streams of Babylon that the exiles sat down and wept when they remembered Zion (Ps 137:1–3). Sitting down and weeping are mentioned in the context of mourning over Jerusalem's destruction in Ps 137.

[413] Xuan Huong Thi Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient NearEast and the Hebrew Bible*, (JSOTSup 302; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 258. See Isa 3:26; 47:5; Lam 2:10, 3:28; Job 2:8; Jonah 3:6. But note Ezek 27:28–30 where the mariners and all the pilots of the sea "stand" on the shore as they lament Tyre's ruin.

[414] See also Lam 1:1 where the verb "to sit" is used and seems to be short for the fuller phrase "sits on the ground" to indicate personified Jerusalem's posture of mourning (Pham, *Mourning in ANE and Bible*, 58).

The duration of time: *šib'at yāmîm* "seven days"

The seven day duration of Ezekiel's seated posture is not a random time frame. Most commentators do not comment on the seven days. Those that do, however, speak of it in various ways: as a week's seclusion from others[415] or as a long period of time testifying to the negative experience.[416] Block, on the other hand, comments, "He sat there resisting the call of God for an entire week, he was a man resistant to the call of the prophetic office, a stubborn man who sits there until Yahweh's patience runs out!"[417] Perhaps there is a more accurate way to understand the nature of these seven days.

As noted above, the ritual mourning seat is the ground. In addition, the ritual period of mourning typically lasted for seven days.[418] Part and parcel of the mourning period was a time of stunned silence which followed the initial phase of loud weeping and wailing. By his own admission Ezekiel describes himself as one "overwhelmed" *mašmîm* (Ezek 3:15). The lexical form *šāmēm* has a range of meanings some of which include silence, shock, despair, and distress.[419] The hiphil participle used here in Ezek 3:15 seems to connote the idea of being speechless and motionless caused by distress.

The combination of ideas found in this verse of sitting, seven days, and *mašmîm* are not found elsewhere. However, one does find two of the three ideas paired in select passages. For example, Ezra *sat* in despair and silence (*šāmēm*) on account of the mixed marriages, not for seven days but until the evening sacrifice, at which time his public prayer breaks his stunned silence and motionless posture.[420] Job and his friends *sit* on the ground for *seven* days and seven nights without saying a word in petrified silence (without *šmm*).[421] The same is true concerning the princes of the sea who witness the fall of Tyre in Ezek 26:16–17, "And on the ground they will *sit* and tremble every moment and be *appalled* (*šmm*) at you. And they will raise over you a lamentation …." The fact that the princes start a lamentation for Tyre after sitting and being appalled is congruent with the ideas in Ezek 3:14–15 even though seven days is not mentioned in Ezek 26:16–17.[422]

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[415] Douglas Stuart, *Ezekiel,* (CCSOT 18; Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988), 44.
[416] Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 82–83.
[417] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 141.
[418] For seven days of mourning elsewhere see Gen 50:10; 1 Sam 31:13; 1 Chr 10:12. But the mourning period varied and could also be 30 days (Deut 34:8; Num 20:29; Deut 21:13). Other texts show the time as "many days" (Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 14:2; 1 Chr 7:22).
[419] BDB 1031.
[420] Ezra 9:3–4.
[421] Job 2:8.
[422] Furthermore, Ezekiel is doing here in Ezek 3:14–15 what personified Jerusalem does in Lam 1:1, 4, 9c, "Alas, she sits alone"… all her gates are deserted/motionless (*šmm*). Pham explains that in Lam 1:1–9b Jerusalem sits in silence (but for an undesignated time period)

Thus in Ezekiel, the seven days of silence may be the functional equivalent of the mourning period. I suggest, therefore, that Ezekiel is describing himself as one participating in mourning rites. It seems reasonable to assume from the use of *mašmîm* that Ezekiel is sitting in a stunned silence and is motionless as a result of the shocking decree of Yahweh. By becoming what he ate, he became a mourner, and subsequently does what mourners do. He has strong emotions and enters into a seven day period of silence when he sits among the exiles.

But Ezekiel's lament and mourning period described here in 3:14–15 seems to be a bit different from that observed in a typical mourning period by the fact that silence might be more emphasized than the loud weeping and wailing. Other than the bitterness, anger, and shock expressed in Ezek 3:14–15, the text does not indicate an initial phase of loud weeping and wailing on the part of the prophet. However, by eating the scroll, Ezekiel, in a role of reversal, internalizes what would normally be the outward expression of loud weeping and wailing expected of mourners. This is keenly seen in Ezek 24:17 where he is commanded to sigh but not aloud.[423] This internalization notwithstanding, Ezekiel still laments and, in fact, is actually commanded to lament elsewhere in the book.[424] Furthermore, he is

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while she listens to the second speaker reflect on her sufferings (Pham, *Mourning in ANE and Bible*, 77). In other words, Jerusalem is sitting on the ground keeping silent. This is the moment of silence in the mourning ritual. She is overwhelmed by all the terrible things that have befallen her. The silence in Lamentations and Ezekiel shows how both parties, Jerusalem and Ezekiel, are "overwhelmed" by their grief. See also personified Jerusalem in Isa 3:26 how she sits upon the ground as does Dibon, the capital of Moab (Jer 48:18a). See especially Moab's lament in Isa 15.

[423] See below for a fuller discussion of Ezek 24:15–24.

[424] In the intriguing sword oracle found in Ezek 21:17 (Eng. 12), the prophet is ordered to express intense mourning by crying out (*zāʿaq*), wailing loudly (*hêlēl*, from *yll*, "to howl"), and to strike his thigh. The latter gesture will be discussed below. With respect to crying and wailing the terms are used in parallel construction and always in the context of expressing grief or sorrow (Hos 7:14; Isa 15:2–4; Jer 25:34; 47:2; 48:20, 31). *Zāʿaq* is occasionally replaced by its variant *ṣāʿaq* as in Isa 65:14; Jer 25:36; 49:3; Zeph 1:10. Both terms may be associated with other mourning gestures. For example, In Ezek 27:30–31 *zāʿaq* is used in conjunction with those who mourn/wail over the fall of Tyre, who are casting dust on their heads, wallowing in ashes, making themselves bald and girding on sackcloth (cf. 2 Sam 13:19; Isa 15:2–4). *yll* refers to distress and grief (the kind of wailing indicative of a broken spirit, Isa 65:14). Likewise, in Ezek 21:11–12 (Eng. 6–7), Yahweh further commands Ezekiel to, " "Sigh/groan, therefore, son of man with breaking of loins and bitter grief before their eyes. And when they say to you, 'Why do you sigh?' You shall say, 'Because of the tidings that are coming, every heart will melt and all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it comes and it will be fulfilled,'" says the Lord God." Here Ezekiel is commanded to groan (*ʾnḥ*), a gesture expressing grief, distress, and deep pain (Ezek 9:4; Exod 2:23; Isa 24:7; Lam 1:4, 8, 11; Prov 29:2). Moreover, the groaning is to be carried out with intense passion, "with breaking of loins" and in bitter grief (*merîrût*, a *hapax legomenon*). When the people queried, "why do you sigh?", he would then tell them, I am sighing, in traditional fashion, because of the tidings of bad news (Hillers, *Lamentations,* 86–90). He was modeling how the people were to react sorrowfully to the

commanded to make certain gestures which appear lament-like, some of which are reminiscent of the goddess in the laments. With respect to commanded gestures, they include the command to shave his beard and head (Ezek 5:1), the command to clap hands and stomp feet (6:11–12), and the command to smite the thigh (21:17 [Eng. 12]).

Ezekiel's Lament Gestures: Ezekiel 5: Shaving hair

In chapter 5 Ezekiel is asked to cut the hair on his beard and head. He is to take a sharpened sword, and use it like a barber's razor to shave off the hair of his head and beard resulting in baldness (Ezek 5:1). The command to shave is one among several dramatic performances Ezekiel must do in Ezek 4:1–5:4, followed by Yahweh's interpretation of those performances.[425] Shaving was an external, nonverbal gesture which displayed sorrow.[426] Baldness resulting from a shaved head is typically how accounts of mourning begin in the biblical text.[427] The act of shaving (in general) is usually interpreted in two ways, either as an act of humiliation[428] or as an act of mourning depending on context.[429] With respect to the former, when humiliation is in view the text expresses it. The latter view, however, is more dominant especially among commentators attempting to interpret Ezekiel's

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tidings already given by Ezekiel on impending judgment (K. Friebel, *Jeremiah and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts: Their Meaning and Function as Nonverbal Communication and Rhetoric* (JSOTSup 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 290–292. See also, W. D. Stacey, *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1990), 197, who takes the "tidings" as referring to the fall of Jerusalem, or C. F. Kiel, "The Prophecies of Ezekiel," in *Commentary on the Old Testament* (trans. J. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 290–291, who understands the report to refer to the news of Babylonian army advancing on Jerusalem. The reaction of the people, therefore, to the divine decree of upcoming judgment was to be one of deep grief. Ezekiel's emotions were to mirror how the people should be feeling. They should be emotionally distressed about the events concerning Jerusalem. The use of (*ʾnḥ*) here in Ezek 21:11–12 is parallel to the use of *hēʾānēq* in 24:17. Both terms reflect an audible groaning in grief. See also Ezek 26:15 and the groaning of the slain. Ezekiel also laments for the royal family of Israel (Ezek 19:1), for Tyre and its king (27:2; 28:11–12), and over Egypt and pharaoh (30:3; 32:2, 16; 32:18). See also W. Farris, Jr., *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 109. He lists 28 key lament terms generally found in the Hebrew Bible. Eighteen of these are also found in Ezekiel. Additionally, Ferris does not include the verbs (*zāʿaq*) and (*hêlēl* from *yll*) employed in Ezekiel as expressions of grief.

[425] Ezek 5:5–17.

[426] Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 236.

[427] Ezek 7:18 shows survivors mourning with baldness on their heads; Ezek 27:30–31 shows onlookers of Tyre's fall having shaved heads; Jer 41:5 shows people shaving in mourning once Jerusalem falls.

[428] 2 Sam 10:4–5; Isa 7:20.

[429] Amos 8:10; Jer 16:6; Jer 47:5; 48:37; Isa 15:2.

shaved head.[430] If by eating the scroll Ezekiel becomes a mourner then, perhaps, the command to shave his beard and head is best understood as an act of mourning as well. The shaving was intended to represent the inhabitants' mourning over Jerusalem's destruction.[431] Furthermore, the goddess in the laments makes a hair related gesture. In an act of self-mutilation, she tears out her own hair in mourning for her people and city.[432]

Ezekiel 6:11–12: clapping hands, stomping feet, and saying alas!

The next gesture that seems to be associated with mourning is found in chapter 6. Yahweh commands Ezekiel to perform two physical gestures in Ezek 6:11–12. Both display a certain sentiment regarding Israel's idolatry. First, he is to set his face towards the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them (6:2–10). Second, "Clap (*hikkâ*) your hands, stomp (*rĕqaʿ*) your feet, and say Ah! (*ʾāḥ*) on account of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel …." The second gesture and sentiment is our concern.

Some commentators view this threefold command of gestures as expressing delight, thus malicious joy.[433] Others view the set of actions as derived from mourning customs, hence, mournful anger.[434] Friebel's observations and interpretations are pertinent here.[435] First, he notes that one has to consider the rationale offered in the text for the action. The rationale behind the commanded actions is directly tied to the evil abominations of the people, the cause of the destruction, and not for the destruction itself.[436] Hence, "to maintain the interpretation that the actions expressed malicious joy, the motivating clause must be overlooked or deleted so that the nonverbally expressed mood reflects an attitude conjoined with the accom-

[430] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 172; J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 56; Odell, *Ezekiel*, 66–68. Job 1:20; Jer 7:29. See also Lev 21:5; Deut 14:1; Ezek 44:20, 25 where shaving the head was associated with mourning rites, something the priests were forbidden to do.

[431] On this point, so too, Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 236. However, he also sees Ezekiel in an active role of God on the basis of Ezek 5:11 and the possibility that God is wielding the razor. If this is the case, then the gesture represents an act of humiliation.

[432] LU 299–301; EL 5:3–6; *balag* 20:g+111–120; *eršemma* 70:25–35. Likewise, Gilgamash mourns Enkidu by pulling out his hair, "The Creation Epic," translated by E. A. Speiser (ANET, 88).

[433] G. Fohrer, *Ezechiel* (HAT 13; Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck, 1955), 40; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 135; D. J. Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel*: *Text and Psychology* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 213.

[434] Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Non-verbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Studia Pohl 12; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 474; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 234–235; Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 255.

[435] Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 254–260.

[436] Ibid., 257.

plishment, not the cause, of the judgment."[437] In this way, Ezek 6:12b sets a limit for the interpretation.[438] Following Friebel, therefore, it seems that mournful anger is the more apt interpretation of the three gestures combined.

A second observation made by Friebel, one that seems to confirm his interpretation above, concerns the use of the interjection *ʾāḥ* with the gesture of clapping hands and stomping the feet. The same form of the interjection is used only one other time in Ezekiel.[439] In both occurrences, Ezekiel is clearly mourning Yahweh's decision to destroy. These instances are to be distinguished from other texts which utilize *heʾāḥ*, a fuller form of the interjection, where the context of scornful joy dominates.[440] Since the longer form is often used in the context of scornful joy, it is assumed that the shortened form must also express the same emotion. But this need not be the case since context determines usage.[441]

Furthermore, the distinction in usage of the short and longer form of the interjection coincides with a switch in verbs for clapping.[442] *Āḥ* occurs with *hikkâ kap* (Ezek 6:11), but *heʾāḥ* with *māḥā kap* (Ezek 25:3, 6). This reinforces the notion, "that the different terms were intentional to express divergent emotional moods manifested by similar nonverbal actions."[443] Friebel concludes that since the gesture of clapping the hands could involve the display of joyful acclamation,[444] joyful scorn over an enemy's defeat,[445] or anger,[446] each text much be considered in its context.[447]

Third, the gesture of feet stomping is not common in the biblical text. It is used here in Ezek 6:11–12 and in Ezek 25:6 with the clapping of hands. But unlike Ezek 6:11–12, Ezek 25:6 does not include the interjection. One should not superimpose the same meaning on both texts.[448] In Ezek 25:6 the dual expression clap hands and stomp feet clearly expresses joy, and the text says so, an emotion that seems to be lacking in Ezek 6:11–12 due to the inclusion of the interjection. In sum, it seems that the interjection in

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[437] Ibid., 257. Furthermore, Yahweh judges the nations for maintaining malicious joy at Jerusalem's expense (Ezek 25:3, 6; 26:2; 36:2).
[438] See also Ezek 18:23; 33:11 for a connection between anger and sorrow. Yahweh expresses anger over Israel's abominations. But in having to follow through with death and destruction he expresses sorrow.
[439] Ezek 21:20 (Eng. 15).
[440] Ezek 25:3; 26:2; 36:2.
[441] Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 255–260.
[442] Ibid., 255–260.
[443] Ibid., 257.
[444] Ps 47:2; 98:8; Isa 55:12; 2 Kgs 11:12.
[445] Ezek 25:6; Nah 3:19; Lam 2:15; Job 27:23.
[446] Num 24:10.
[447] Ibid., 256.
[448] Contrary to Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 235.

Ezek 6:11 should be taken as an expression of lamentation since clapping and stomping feet expresses mournful anger.

Thus, the combined meaning and force of the gesture represents a combination of anger which was tempered by grief, not anger associated with vindictive joy.[449] In this gesture, Ezekiel responds emotionally not only to the news of destruction as before, but also to the cause of it much like the goddess' mournful anger in the laments. However, the misconduct of the people under the care of the goddess is never mentioned as rationale for the cause of the destruction.

Ezekiel 21:17 [Eng. 21:12]: smite your thigh

The last gesture relating to mourning appears in Ezek 21:17 with the advertisement that the sword is coming upon Jerusalem. The prophet is ordered to "cry out (*zāʿaq*) and wail (*hêlēl*, from *yll*, 'to howl')" and "smite, therefore, upon your thigh." The rationale for the entire command concerns the horror that the sword will bring when it falls. Smiting the thigh on its own communicates remorse, grief, pain or shock.[450] But used in conjunction with crying out and howling, an atmosphere of grief and lamentation prevails. As pointed out by Friebel, the emotions expressed by all these gestures are what the exiles should currently demonstrate; they are not representative of their future response.[451]

This latter gesture, though common enough in Mesopotamia, [452] is one that the goddess appears to be doing in the laments. In LU one finds two lines that seem to represent parallel actions. The first part of LU 154 refers to an action being done with/to the thigh or leg, "verily I clasped (?) legs/thigh/upper thigh," while the second part of LU 154 states, "the arms verily I stretched."[453] Dobbs-Allsopp notes that the stretching out and lifting up of hands combined with the parallel action being done with/to the thigh or leg represents some type of mourning in the laments.[454]

Thus, Ezekiel's commanded gestures (shaving, clapping hands, stomping feet, and striking thigh) also seem to point to outward expressions of mourning. They represent a continuity and progression through the book that he has become a mourner, something that commenced with his own voluntary response to the scroll in Ezek 3:14–15.

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[449] Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 302.
[450] Jer 31:19. See also, Gruber, *Aspects of Non-verbal Communication*, 380; E. Lipinski, "'*Se battre la cuisse*,'" *VT* 20 (1970): 495.
[451] Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 304. Indeed, Ezek 24:17 makes it clear that an outward response of mourning when they hear the news of Jerusalem's fall will not be appropriate.
[452] Gruber, *Aspects of Non-verbal Communication*, 380.
[453] This follows Jacobsen's translation (*Lamentation over Ur*, 457).
[454] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 78 note #208. See also *balag* 42:c+364; *eršemma* 79:33. Other lament gestures show the goddess beating or clawing the breast or tearing out hair (e.g. LU 299–301; EL 5:3–6, *balag* 20:g+111–120; *eršemma* 79:25–35).

SUMMARY OF EZEKIEL'S RESPONSE TO THE SCROLL INCIDENT

Thus, Ezekiel's reaction and description of himself as outlined in 3:14–15 uncovers more than meets the eye. Clearly, more than just a test of his obedience is in view. Ezekiel's lamenting role now comes into sharper focus. It appears from the various components discussed above that his bitterness, fury, sitting posture, and the use of *šāmēm* with *šibʿat yāmîm* reveals he is performing mourning rites as a result of meeting with the deity and consuming the scroll, which denoted Jerusalem's decreed destruction by Yahweh. Likewise, his initial lament in Ezek 3:14–15, together with subsequent supplications, and consistent mourning cries and gestures throughout the book provide ample and consistent evidence to suggest that he has taken on the role of mourner. As will be argued below, it is a role, however, that does not cease after seven days.

But there are more aspects of Ezekiel's role that illumine the legitimacy of the comparison. If on account of the scroll incident Ezekiel assumes the role of a mourner and becomes like the goddess in the laments, it follows that one might expect to find corroborating evidence of this beyond the scroll incident. To this evidence I now turn.

EVIDENCE BEYOND THE SCROLL INCIDENT THAT INDICATES EZEKIEL IS A MOURNER AND AT TIMES IS CHARACTERIZED LIKE THE CITY GODDESS (APART FROM FORMAL CITY LAMENT FEATURES)

After the ritual mourning period the mourner typically returns to normal life.[455] At the end of seven days, Ezekiel, the mourner, does not return to normal life. In fact, normal life for Ezekiel may not occur until he is able to speak again at the news of Jerusalem's fall.[456] Normal has been redefined for him and this is illustrated by the way Yahweh responds to Ezekiel's lament. First, he makes Ezekiel Israel's watchman (Ezek 3:16–21); second, he appears to extend Ezekiel's mourning period (Ezek 3:22–27); and third, he places the prophet under siege (Ezek 4:1–5:17). These initiatives of Yahweh make better sense if, indeed, Ezekiel has become a mourner like the city goddess.

Yahweh Makes Ezekiel Watchman (Ezek 3:16–21)

After Ezekiel's seven days of mourning, Yahweh first makes Ezekiel Israel's watchman. Ezekiel was expected to protect, defend and to care for

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[455] Pham, *Mourning Practices in ANE and Bible*, 24.
[456] Ezek 33:22.

the people's well being; he became responsible for their life and death. While it is not uncommon for Israelite prophets to be designated as watchmen,[457] Ezekiel's appointment in this capacity differs significantly because he bears a heavier weight of responsibility, one that entails the giving of his own life.[458] Yahweh appoints him to announce enemy invasion. Block points out the startling nature of such an appointment because, "The God of Israel is the danger against whose arrival people are to be warned!"[459] Presumably, the Babylonian attack on Israel represented a clear and present danger, one that necessitated a fair warning by the watchman/the city watching.

Further evidence of his responsibility appears another way in the book, one that seems related to his watchman role. The people under Ezekiel's care are designated as "your people" *ʿammekā*. The phrase *ʿammekā*, part of the fuller construct, "sons of your people" *bĕnê ʿammekā*, occurs a total of six times in Ezekiel. Of these, three, possibly four, are directly related to the watchman context (33:2, 12, 17, 30), and two are unrelated instances (3:11; 37:18). Besides Ezekiel, the only other prophet that utilizes the full designation is Daniel.[460] Hence, it seems the designation *bĕnê ʿammekā* is deliberate in Ezekiel. It serves to highlight the important relationship Ezekiel has with the people as their watchman.

As such, Ezekiel seems to be portrayed much like the city goddess of the laments on account of the immense responsibility he has for Israel, and due to the close knit relationship that exists between the two. The city laments often emphasize the goddess in this way. For example, LU shows Ningal rushing to her city's defense like a bird flapping (LU 3:80–85). Likewise, Ninlil, the great mother of Nippur has heart felt concern for the security of her people in their dwellings (NL 190–210).[461] Attached to this commitment to defend, one frequently finds that the city's inhabitants are described as belonging to the goddess,[462] reflective of the special relationship. Ningal's people are referred to as "your people who have been led to slaughter …" (LU 7:341), "your black-headed people do not wash themselves during thy feasts" (LU 7:357).

On account of these things, both Ezekiel and the city laments reflect a broader tradition found in the ancient Near East. Indeed, the literary tradi-

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[457] Isa 56:10; Jer 6:17; Hos 9:8; Hab 2:1.
[458] Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–18*, 50; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 90.
[459] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 144.
[460] Dan 11:14; 12:1. When *ʿammekā* is used without *bĕnê* in other prophets, it usually refers to those belonging to the Lord (Isa 2:6; 63:14; 64:8; Jer 32:21; Dan 9:15, 19, 24; Joel 2:17; Mic 7:14; Nah 3:18; Hab 3:13). In some cases the people mentioned belong to, and are in close association with, a certain king, either an Israelite, Babylonian, Tyrian, or Assyrian king (Isa 7:17, 14, 20; Ezek 26:11; Hab 3:18).
[461] The goddesses' responsibility to protect her city and people is also witnessed in other places by her numerous supplications and frequent prayers for restoration.
[462] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 81.

tions of the ancient Near East, Sumer, and the Eastern Mediterranean perceived cities as female, and Israel was a part of this tradition.[463] That Ezekiel is a metaphor for the city of Jerusalem makes his role resonate with the city goddesses in the East Semitic world[464] where "the continuous presence of a weeping goddess, both identified with and speaking laments on behalf of her city can be documented for the entirety of the second and first millennia."[465] It is possible that through this literary portrayal of Ezekiel as the city one finds a creative adaptation of the goddess motif in the Hebrew Bible.[466] Perhaps feminine aspects of the deity are absorbed into

[463] Frymer-Kensky, *Wake of the Goddess*, 172. In the ancient world goddesses and gods were closely associated with their cities. Their association and identification with their respective cities made them responsible for the well-being of the city and its inhabitants. They were seen as protecting a people, city or individuals (Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 88). Goddesses were patrons and overseers of cities, "the city contains the populace within her walls, nurtures it, provides for it, and defends it" (Frymer-Kensky, *Wake of the Goddess*, 172).

[464] Contra the West Semitic world, see the thesis of A. Fitzgerald, "Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the O.T.," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 403–416.

[465] Bouzard, *Sources*, 166.

[466] Unlike ancient Near Eastern religious texts where the presence of the goddess, her power, and her pre-eminence go unquestioned, the goddess' presence remains questionable in the Hebrew Bible and has sparked no little debate. Both the biblical and extra-biblical evidence has led to varying interpretations as it relates to Israelite religion. By and large scholarly consensus indicates that Yahwistic religion did not tolerate the goddess as an independent personality. That is to say, as far as we know, the feminine aspects of the goddess were either absorbed into the male deity, Yahweh, not allowing for her separate existence, or the goddess was initially absent (Patrick Miller, "The Absence of the Goddess in Israelite Religion," *HAR* 10 (1986): 245. Bouzard (*Sources*, 168) who adopts Miller's principle of absorption suggests that further evidence of this is seen in the book of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah one finds Yahweh weeping in several texts (Jer 8:18–9:3; 14:17–18; 4:19–21; 9:9). Bouzard rests his claim on the syntactical analyses of J. J. Roberts, "The Motif of the Weeping God in Jeremiah and Its Background in the Lament Tradition of the Ancient Near East," in *Old Testament Essays* 5 (1992), 361–374, and Mark Smith, "Jeremiah IX 9–A Divine Lament," *VT* 37 (1987): 97–99. Both Roberts and Smith understand the lamenting voice in Jeremiah as that of Yahweh and not the prophet as is commonly articulated. Thus, it is safe to argue that, Jeremiah shows vestiges of the goddess, particularly her "weeping" aspect in an Israelite religious context whereby Yahweh weeps over Jerusalem's destruction. But reflexes of the goddess have also been recognized with respect to the personification of cities as female in the Hebrew Bible. The use of this particular figure of speech is limited to Israel's poets such as is articulated in the biblical book of Lamentations and is especially dominant in the prophetic corpus with respect to Jerusalem and other cities. Additionally, the context in which the personification typically occurs is one of suffering, disaster and agony (Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 85–86). The personification of cities as female then represents another angle from which dimensions of the feminine have been incorporated into an expression of Israelite religion. Thus, when Yahweh or Jerusalem weeps in the Hebrew Bible, it represents a specific aspect and adaptation of the goddess. In this way, it appears that that the image evolved from, and has been reused and transformed as a replacement for, Kramer's literary figure known as the "weeping goddess" who made her colorful debut in Sumerian literature (Kramer, "The Weeping Goddess," 69–80). I would like to propose yet

Ezekiel's role not unlike weeping Yahweh in Jeremiah, and the personification of cities in other parts of the Hebrew Bible. If, in fact, Ezekiel is being portrayed like the city goddesses of the laments one can better understand the watchman role assigned to him by Yahweh.

Yahweh Extends Ezekiel's Mourning Period (Ezek 3:22–27; 24:17): Understanding Ezekiel's Confinement and Speechlessness

Beyond making Ezekiel Israel's watchman, Yahweh appears to be extending Ezekiel's mourning period. There are a few reasons for this suggestion. First, Ezekiel's confinement and speechlessness in Ezek 3:22–27 seem to be connected syntactically. Yahweh commands Ezekiel to go into house confinement and proceeds to inform him that he will be speechless. Ezek 3:24b–25b states, "shut yourself in the midst of your house and you shall not go out in their midst. And you, O son of man, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among them." As evidenced by the use of the conjunction, the statement in 3:26 "And I shall make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth so that you shall be dumb and unable to reprove them; for they are a rebellious house" is syntactically related to the confinement previously mentioned.[467] In these verses Yahweh demands Ezekiel's seclusion. He secures the seclusion, so it seems, by having him bound with cords. At the same time, Yahweh secures Ezekiel's silence by temporally impeding his speech. No doubt the prophet's confinement and speechlessness are difficult to grasp. Scholars have struggled with understanding Ezekiel's seclusion and speechlessness.[468] However, perhaps we are meant to understand the confinement and speechless in relationship to each other.

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another possible adaptation of the weeping goddess motif as found in the role of the prophet Ezekiel.

[467] Ezek 3:26 notes Yahweh's rationale for the speechlessness, "so that … you are unable to reprove them." Admittedly, the stated rationale for the impediment does not explicitly speak of mourning. Although reproving with words, in typical prophetic fashion was not possible, Ezekiel would be showing them right behavior as a mourner.

[468] Scholars since Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, 158–160) have wrestled with this passage for various reasons. Is the binding literal or figurative of the opposition Ezekiel will face in his ministry? How does one make sense of a speechless prophet? This apparent oxymoron and contradiction has given rise to a plethora of questions concerning the nature and interpretation of the impediment. Was it a physiological or pathological dumbness? Was it a divinely imposed silence? Should one perceive it as actual or metaphorical, physical or symbolic, permanent or temporary, total or partial? Is his dumbness an editorial device or does it serve a larger function relative to the book's shape? Those that see it as secondary do so on account of its likeness with 24:25–27 and 33:21–22, the promise and fulfillment of Ezekiel's speechlessness. From the perspective of chronology it is proposed that the passage reflects a period of time before Jerusalem fell (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 159–161). Some have interpreted the silence as symbolic of Yahweh's temporary silence towards Israel (Fohrer, *Ezechiel*, 45) or more specifically, Yahweh's curtailment of the prophetic role. See Robert R. Wilson, "An

Understanding the house confinement and speechlessness as related is particularly tantalizing in light of the possible connection to mourning. Generally, to be motionless is connected to silence as a sign of mourning.[469] The silence is, obviously, not permanent but conditional due to the abnormal circumstances. We have already seen in Ezek 3:15 how the prophet voluntarily became speechless and motionless for seven days. Now in Ezek 3:25–26, his speechlessness and motionless are involuntary. They are impositions of Yahweh on his life. Under normal circumstances no prophet would be motionless much less speechless. But if Yahweh is extending Ezekiel's state of mourning everything changes.

The reaction of David in 2 Sam 12 might provide a precedent for understanding confinement and speechlessness together as components of mourning. When David learns that his illegitimate child became sick, he confined himself to his house and lay on the ground without moving for seven days. In anticipation of the impending death of this son, David wept and refused food in hopes that his mourning might cause Yahweh to extend grace to him (2 Sam 12:22). The elders of his house tried to move and feed him after the first night but without success (2 Sam 12:17). Although the text does not specifically say, the assumption is that David was speechless. His refusal to listen to the elders might indicate his refusal to speak (2 Sam 12:18). David was motionless (on the ground) and confined to his house until the child actually died on the seventh day (2 Sam 12:16–19). Thus, it is possible given David's example that both Ezekiel's imposed house confinement and his speechlessness relate to mourning. But there may be a more compelling reason still.

The second reason for interpreting Ezekiel's confinement and speechlessness in terms of an extending mourning period has to do with the fact

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Interpretation of Ezekiel's Dumbness," *VT* 22 (1973): 91–104. M. Greenberg "The Dumbness of Ezekiel," *JBL* 77 (1958): 100–105 suggests that the dumbness refers to both God's rejection of Israel and the prophet's rejection of exilic hostilities towards him. With others I maintain that that his speechlessness was not permanent but temporary. It was also intermittent in that Ezekiel could deliver a message from Yahweh when asked to do so. His seven years of relative silence in conjunction with the divine imposition of seclusion makes the case even stronger that Ezekiel assumes the role of a mourner. The symbolism of his silence may connote Yahweh's silence and distance from his people, but the cumulative weight of evidence points towards an extended mourning period.

Thus both Ezekiel's speechless and confinement should be taken literally and are best explained in its present context. Ezekiel's literal confinement is confirmed throughout the book. Ezekiel's audience comes to him on four occasions (8:1; 14:1; 20:1; 33:30). With the exception of 12:3 he is not once found outside his house. Greenberg observes this fact as well and concludes "Isaiah moves about Jerusalem; he meets the king and officers. Jeremiah does too. But Ezekiel is never found outside his house …" (Greenberg, "The Dumbness of Ezekiel," 100–105). More importantly, Ezekiel's speechlessness should not be divorced from the divine imposition of confinement. For more of a discussion on the various views and their proponents on this passage see Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 154–160.

[469] Pham, *Mourning Practices in ANE and Bible*, 65.

that his speechlessness, in particular, is co-terminus with the fate of the city (Ezek 3:22–27; 33:21–23). In Ezek 24:25–27 Yahweh promises that on the day the fugitive arrives with the news of Jerusalem's fall he will again speak. Ezek 33:21–23 reports that this, in fact, happened, "Now the hand of the Lord had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; and he had opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning; so my mouth was opened, and I was no longer dumb." According to Friebel, the speechlessness would have encompassed about a seven and a half year period (*ca*. 593–586 B.C.).[470] This interpretation of the prophet's speechless, as an extended mourning period,[471] something co-terminus with the fate of the city, may explain other elements of Ezek 24.

I have been arguing that Ezekiel became a mourner as a result of ingesting the scroll. Now, at the death of his wife, when one anticipates and fully expects to see the prophet mourning, a reversal of norms prevails. The expected reaction to death is surprisingly forbidden. At the death of Ezekiel's wife the prophet is permitted to sigh only inwardly not outwardly. He is not permitted to engage in what appears to be the traditional, ceremonial expressions of mourning rites. Ezek 24:24, 27 inform that dumb Ezekiel is the *môpēt*, "symbol" of the city which laments, but not out loud.[472] His response to her death is meant to mirror the people when they hear the news of Jerusalem's fall.

Several comments are necessary with respect to Ezek 24:17, *hēʾānēq dōm* "sigh but not aloud." First, regardless of the outward suppression, he is still commanded and permitted to sigh inwardly, evidence of the scroll incident where he internalized what would normally be the loud outward expression of mourning.[473] Second, the command not to mourn for the dead (*mētîm ʾēbel lô tʿāśâ*) is instructive. The fact that he has to be told *not* to lament might indicate that he was mourning all along, and that the accept-

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[470] Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 181.

[471] Pham (*Mourning in ANE and Bible*, 19) cites Gilgamesh as an example of one whose mourning period lasted longer than the typical seven day period. Cf. Gilg. 12:10–28. See R. C. Thompson, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: Text, Transliteration, and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).

[472] Odell understands the timing of Ezekiel's dumbness to be equivalent to the duration of his symbolic acts which end in chapter 5 (Odell, "You are what you Eat," 234–236). Allen's literal reading of 3:26–27, 24:25–27 and 33:21–22 states that Ezekiel could not speak until the fall of Jerusalem (*Ezekiel 1–19*, 62).

[473] Friebel also interprets Ezek 24:17 as a positive command. He states that Ezek 24:17 should be understood along with *mētîm ʾēbel lô tʿāśâ*. Friebel notes how the full phrase "sigh but not aloud and make no mourning for the dead" should be seen as two imperatives/commands coordinated asyndetically. *hēʾānēq* carries the principle idea followed by the qualification *dōm*. Since *hēʾānēq* is auditory, the qualification *dōm* requires the same auditory sense, hence the meaning for the full phrase, "to groan silently or groan in silence." This meaning results in a positive command. The prophet should groan but be silent when doing so. In this way Ezekiel could inwardly grieve but still abstain from the prohibited outward mourning gestures (*Sign-Acts*, 181).

able time to mourn for Judah and all her unrighteousness has passed. Indeed, it seems mourning was something Judah should have aspired to all along.[474] Thus when one reads Ezek 24:17 and the series of commands prohibiting him from mourning at his wife's death coupled with the promised end of his speechlessness when Jerusalem "dies," it seems to signal an official end to his extended mourning period. If his lament role finds an "official" end when his speechlessness returns, then donning the turban is more evidence.

Donning the turban is traditionally understood as an indicator that morning has ended regardless of scant textual support.[475] Although Odell does not completely discard the traditional view, she argues that donning the turban signifies *more* than the end of mourning because of its association in wedding imagery (Isa 61:10), in clothing for priests or their election (Exod 39:28; Ezek 44:18; Zech 3:5).[476] In these broader contexts the turban represents a status transformation.[477]

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[474] For example, in Ezek 8–11 the importance of the mourning over sin is firmly established. There are several references to mourning which seem to suggest that, along with divine abandonment, mourning is also a crucial component to the vision. First, Yahweh cautions Ezekiel about lamenters and mourners; he will not hear them (Ezek 8:18). Second, Yahweh instructs his agent of destruction (the man in linen) to spare those who are mourning and grieving over the abominations in Jerusalem (Ezek 9:4). Third, Ezekiel himself gestures and speaks as one in mourning after he hears Yahweh's decree to destroy, and after Pelatiah's death (Ezek 9:8; 11:13). It appears, therefore, that the expected norm was for people to mourn given the nature of their spiritual crisis (leading to divine abandonment and destruction). Mourning was altogether appropriate. Friebel (*Sign-Acts*, 258), also notes how the "righteous person is depicted in Ezek 1–24 as one who has feelings of God which incorporated an attitude akin to mourning over the unrighteousness within Judah." However, Yahweh makes it clear that there is also a proper time for the house of Judah to mourn. Unfortunately, for those who were attempting to mourn, they missed the appropriate window of opportunity. As a result, Yahweh rejects any prayers or pleas of mercy from the people, and the prophet that might have reversed his decision. Additionally, the man clothed in linen appears not to have found any mourners to spare in Jerusalem. This indicates the hardened nature of the people, a fact already known to Yahweh (Ezek 2–3). There is, perhaps, one text that reveals a lament-like sentiment on behalf of the people. Ezek 33:10 notes that on account of their sins, the exiled population admits to Ezekiel their own sorrow and despair. They say, *ʾekah* or "alas/how shall we live?" The exclamatory *ʾekah* only appears here and in Ezek 26:17 when Tyre falls and the princes of the sea exclaim, "Alas (*ʾekah*), you have vanished from the sea …" This exclamation is typical lament terminology. Zimmerli also sees it as a lament of the house of Israel (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 187). But the timing of this sorrow and grief appears to come too late, indeed. So while Judah did not mourn, God assigned Ezekiel with that role. However, on account of the scroll, Yahweh will not change his mind.

[475] Odell, *Ezekiel*, 319; Odell notes that other than Isa 61:3, the removal of a turban is not mentioned in what is known of biblical mourning practices. Hence, donning the turban is not indicative of the reversal.

[476] Ibid. The emphasis here is mine.

[477] Ibid.

Following this interpretation, I would like to suggest that by donning the turban Ezekiel's mourning status has been changed. It is an image that reflects, out of death comes life. In this way, Odell is right to suggest that Ezekiel models the new identity of the exiles by showing Jerusalem's glory after the city falls.[478] "As Israel's *môpēt*, his sign manifests the certainty of their restoration, a new status for prophet and people alike."[479] This interpretation helps explain why it is no longer necessary for Ezekiel to mourn. Indeed, the time to mourn has come and gone.[480]

When all this happens, Ezekiel the mourner could expect to return to normal life. He could expect that restoration would commence.[481] Hence, the outward suppression of mourning that is found in this verse, "make no mourning for the dead" (*mētîm ʾēbel lô tʿāsâ*) represents a change in his mourning role, one that was initially established by eating the scroll.[482] Perhaps there is a warrant, therefore, for understanding Ezekiel's confinement and speechlessness in light of an extended mourning period.

Yahweh places Ezekiel under siege (4:1–5:17)

Not only has Yahweh made Ezekiel Israel's watchman and extended his mourning period, but he also places Ezekiel under siege. In the initial dramatic performances of the book found in Ezek 4:1–17, it appears that Ezekiel is actually the city under siege. For example, in Ezek 4:1–3 there is the detailed siege of the city. Clearly at the outset of the performance there is a distinction between Ezekiel and the city; "take an iron plate, and place it as an iron wall between you and the city …." But in Ezek 4:4–8 this distinction is eventually removed. Ezekiel is tied up as a figure of the house of Israel and Judah and is commanded to set his face toward the siege of Jerusalem (4:4–7), but in Ezek 4:8, in particular, this is designated as your

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[478] Odell, *Ezekiel*, 206.
[479] Odell, "Genre and Persona," 210.
[480] This is much like David in 2 Sam 12. When the child dies he does not mourn but returns to life as he knew it.
[481] Ironically, after the announcement of the city's fall and the return of Ezekiel's speech in Ezek 33:11, the theme of restoration emerges in the text. Ezekiel laments no more.
[482] The fate described in Ezek 24:15–24 served as a metaphor for the death of the Jerusalem temple, as is further explained in Ezek 24:19–24. Thus Ezekiel, like Yahweh, will lose both temple and "wife" at once. Ezekiel and the people are to refrain from any outward signs of mourning; see J. Galambash, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*. The metaphor used in Ezekiel seems to be similar but yet a reversal to that which is found in Mesopotamian lament literature. In the *balags* and *eršemmas*, the liturgical laments, a recurrent stereotypical motif is the mourning for a doomed husband or son (S. Kramer, "BM 98396: A Sumerian Prototype," *EI* 14 [1982]: 141). The weeping goddess is portrayed as bemoaning such a loss and most of the time the doomed party's identity remains a mystery. At times, however, the party is known or can be deduced. For example, Inanna mourns her husband Dumuzi who was carried off to the Netherworld. Indeed this tragic fate served as a metaphor for the death of the Sumerian king, cities and temple (Ibid., 141).

siege; "And, behold, I will put cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege," hence, Ezekiel and the city are one.

Most commentators overlook the possessive "your siege" in Ezek 4:8. Instead they focus on the literal or figurative nature of the binding mentioned in Ezek 4:8a and its possible connection to Ezek 3:25.[483] When comparing the language of Ezek 5:2 with 4:8 (which uses *klh*) it seems to indicate that 4:8 is deliberately placing Ezekiel in the role of the city, one already established through his watchman role. Thus the flow of 4:4–8 is such that the siege of Jerusalem mentioned in 4:7 becomes Ezekiel's siege in 4:8. Furthermore in 4:9–17 he gets rations which symbolize the rations of Jerusalem. And in Ezek 4:3 "this is a sign" (*'ôt*) is used. Thus especially in the dramatic performances of Ezek 4:1–5:4, Ezekiel identifies with the siege, famine and destruction by becoming the city. Like the Sumerian goddess in East Semitic, and so often in West Semitic, Ezekiel is the besieged city. As Odell suggests, by participating in the judgment of God he also identifies with the people.[484]

Rather than enjoy the privileges of his priestly service back in Jerusalem (if in fact, the prophet was headed for such service), Ezekiel has had to relinquish all due to the exile. In this, too, he seems to be characterized like the goddess. In a very general sense the goddess had to relinquish aspects of her identity in the divine council, had no bargaining power, becomes like her people and suffers exile, "I, Ningal, I am one who has been exiled from the house, I am one who has been exiled from the city, I am one who has found no rest" (LU 306–308).[485] She experiences siege and famine "Ur, inside it is death, outside it is death, Inside we die of famine …"[486] and she feels the Storm's destruction (LU 80–85). Through her misfortunes and sufferings inflicted upon her by Enlil's decree of destruction, the goddess identifies with her city much like Ezekiel is called upon to do via his dramatic performances. The fate of the city and people is his fate.

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[483] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 180; Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 95; Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 223–224; Stuart, *Ezekiel*, 58; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 56; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 106). To their credit both Zimmerli and Allen make attempts to understand this possessive noun. Zimmerli's purpose in highlighting the phrase "the days of your siege" is to determine whether Ezekiel's suffering is active or passive (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 164). Allen tries to avoid the perceived ambiguity of the phrase by adopting another vocalization for the term. As such the verse would read, "In fact, I will put ropes round you to stop you turning from one side to the other until you have completed your period for the siege" (Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 50). With this reading, the possessive noun refers to the restrictions imposed on Ezekiel rather than the notion of a siege. But even though Allen adopts this rendering, he rightly acknowledges how it conflicts with 5:2: "… when the days of the siege are completed (*ml'*)…."

[484] Odell, "Genre and Persona," 248. See also Ezek 12:1–6; 12:17–20.

[485] See also LSUr 150, 273–274.

[486] LU 271, 273; LSUr 9–11; LSUr 399–401.

Thus, by making Ezekiel Israel's watchman, by extending his mourning, and by placing the prophet under siege, I have shown select evidence beyond the scroll incident which seems to characterize Ezekiel like the goddess of the laments, confirming his role of mourner.

SUMMARY

The scroll sets an undeniable mood and tone to Ezekiel's ministry. Based on the scroll incident, Ezekiel's response to it, and elements in the book beyond the scroll I have put forward several lines of evidence reflecting Ezekiel's role as mourner, and his connection to the weeping goddess of the laments: *first*, a similar literary context of exile (both have been uprooted, forced to abandon their respective homes and have become exiles in a foreign land); *second,* the nature of the scroll, Yahweh's scroll (like Enlil's word) communicates the irrevocable and devastating news to Ezekiel and upon eating it, makes him a mourner like the goddess; *third*, his response of bitterness and anger to Yahweh's decree resembles the goddess; *fourth*, his supplications for the remnant, like the goddess, requesting Yahweh to spare Jerusalem of its suffering; and *fifth*, he actually becomes the city, he is the city watching and closely identifing with his people. In short, both are mourners and grieve over the loss of their people, temple and city. Thus the scroll and the corroborating evidence outlined above (his watchman role, confinement, speechlessness, and his dramatic performance as the city under siege) enhance our understanding of Ezekiel's role.

The scroll also sets a tone for his book. It was suggested that the scroll's contents indicate a lament sub-genre. Thus, if Ezekiel's portrayal can be connected to the goddess of the laments, and if the scroll points to an embedded lament sub-genre (his book) as I have suggested, then the scroll could be seen as providing the main subject matter for Ezekiel's book.[487] Indeed, the scroll is an important piece of internal evidence that accounts for city lament features elsewhere in Ezekiel.[488] The remaining chapters investigate the literary impact of the scroll on the book's shape and subject matter.

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[487] The scroll *initially* seems to provide us with the subject and mood of the book. Likewise, Ezekiel's ingestion of the scroll makes him a mourner, thus, an adaptation of the weeping goddess feature can be seen in the person of Ezekiel. In the narrative of this chapter, therefore, three of the nine city lament features have been discussed (*subject and mood*, *the weeping goddess* and *lamentation*).

[488] If this is the case, notions of literary borrowing or a generic relationship become secondary and should be considered after examining this internal evidence, not before. Furthermore, the evidence espoused here goes a long way to disproving Odell's point about Ezekiel's appropriation of the inscriptional genre for a literary mode. Odell's proposed adaptation of the building inscription genre seems a bit of a stretch, a creative idea that does not appear to stand the scrutiny of the book's internal evidence.

CHAPTER FOUR: UNDERSTANDING YAHWEH'S ANGER AND ABANDONMENT OF JERUSALEM IN LIGHT OF THE MCL

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I tried to show that the implications of the prophet's ingestion of the scroll are crucial for understanding Ezekiel's role in the book. Not only does the scroll and the circumstances surrounding it seem to set a mournful tone for Ezekiel's ministry, but it also anticipates the contents of the book. It was also suggested that the scroll could be likened to "the decision" of the divine assembly in the laments. In this way, Yahweh bears responsibility for the divine act leading to destruction. Beyond the scroll, however, Yahweh further expresses responsibility for his decision, something that seems to be evidenced by the divine-word formulae used throughout the book, and by a certain look Yahweh gives. Together these two items reinforce Yahweh's decision, a fate already decreed by the scroll. Yahweh's word and look are definitive and unchangeable, something that not even Ezekiel's prophetic mediation can stop.[489] The responsibility Yahweh takes through these two means could be likened to Enlil in the laments. The fate of the cities is described in the laments as determined by the "word of Enlil" and in some cases even Enlil's look, his evil gaze or frown bring destruction. Not even the goddess could change the city's fate. Unlike Enlil in the laments, however, Yahweh's decision to destroy is not arbitrary or whimsical.[490] Yahweh clearly assigns responsibility to his people for the decree issuing their destruction, a point made quite forcefully in the book.

The first part of this chapter discusses *assignment of responsibility*. I will compare and contrast Yahweh with Enlil in that Yahweh, like Enlil, assumes responsibility for the decision to destroy Jerusalem, something further evidenced by the divine word formulae attached to his angry proclamation(s) to destroy, and by the special look he offers Jerusalem. I will also show that Yahweh assigns responsibility to the people for Jerusalem's demise. Ezekiel's use of *ʿāwōn* "guilt," his use of *tôʿēbōt* "abominations," his use of the phrase *yaʿan … lākēn* "because … therefore," and his use of historical retrospect found in Ezek 16, 20, and 23 are reflective of that responsibility. Indeed, there is a motivation behind Yahweh's fury. The second part of this chapter discusses *divine abandonment*, a logical consequence to both Yahweh's anger and Israel's guilt.[491]

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[489] This stands in contrast to Jeremiah which does show the possibility of reversing the sentence, even at the time of the final siege, Jer 38:17.

[490] In the laments no fault is found with the people. The deities appear capricious and whimsical and unjustified in their fury on Sumer. See chapter one for a full discussion.

[491] The rationale for commencing with these two features, besides those already discussed in relationship to the scroll in chapter three, concerns a logical progression in thought. On

These two features may indicate reflexes of the city lament in Ezekiel. Without the scroll incident this might be coincidental; their appearance could simply reflect standard imagery for ruined cities in general. However, due to the circumstances involved with the scroll, which in the previous chapter I argued signals a lament-sub-genre, it is reasonable to suggest that these similarities are features of a city lament. In light of all this it is possible that Ezekiel frames Yahweh's wrath, Israel's sin, and the expected covenantal curses into a literary framework resembling the city lament (assignment of responsibility, divine abandonment) as a result of consuming the scroll.

ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY: YAHWEH ASSUMES SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

As references and images in the book of Ezekiel make clear, Yahweh is characterized in Ezekiel by his angry disposition.[492] In this way Yahweh, like Enlil, bears responsibility for the divine act.[493] Indeed, it is his angry disposition that is *partially* responsible for Jerusalem's destruction.[494] His anger translates into unchangeable words of destruction initially communicated by the scroll. But he also reveals his displeasure through the divine word motif so prominent in the book. Although the divine word motif is

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account of the scroll, Yahweh's divine-word formulae, and uncompassionate gaze, he bears responsibility for the upcoming destruction. Yet the people also bear responsibility because they are guilty. All of this naturally leads Yahweh to abandon Jerusalem. After abandoning Jerusalem he authorizes his agents of destruction to unleash his full fury on Jerusalem, resulting in utter devastation and destruction (see chapter five for a discussion on the features of *divine agents of destruction* and *destruction*). It should also be noted at this juncture that *structure and poetic technique* (which includes authorial point of view, contrast and reversal, focus, external and metrical structure, and lists) will not be isolated for review in the same way as the other features. Instead, I will alert the reader to it by incorporating some of these elements in the on-going narrative. Indeed, the items listed under *structure and poetic technique* could constitute an entire study in the book of Ezekiel.

[492] This is apparent due to Ezekiel's frequent use of the word *ḥēmâ* "fury," "wrath" or "anger." Of the 31 instances in Ezekiel, all but three refer to Yahweh's fury against Israel. (Ezek 25:14 refers to Yahweh's anger towards Edom; 25:17 towards Philistia; and 30:15 towards Egypt.) Furthermore, 21 of these references personalize the anger. It is Yahweh's anger, thus the use of the possessive noun *ḥămātî* "my anger." The concentration of the term in Ezekiel and its reference to divine anger represents about one third of all occurrences of *ḥēmâ* in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, no other prophet utilizes the term as much as Ezekiel. When one surveys all the *ḥēmâ* texts in Ezekiel it becomes evident that not only is Yahweh furious, but that his fury is extreme. The term is typically imbedded in a divine proclamation which is then sealed by a form of the well-known recognition formula. These points are best illustrated by four main texts (Ezek 5:13–15; 16:42; 21:22; and 24:13).

[493] In theory it is the anger of the gods that is responsible for the destruction of the city and people in the laments. The laments are filled with numerous references to the wrath of Enlil or An. See chapter one.

[494] See below for a discussion on Israel's responsibility.

common and characteristic of deities in the ancient Near East,[495] its use in Ezekiel, combined with the cumulative weight of evidence being gathered for the present comparison, can be considered analogous to that of Enlil in the laments.

Yahweh's Unchangeable Word: Prophetic Formulae in Ezekiel

The divine word motif dominates Ezekiel. In fact, Yahweh's words overshadow and overtake the person of Ezekiel. In some ways, he becomes a non-person which enables Yahweh's voice to be heard. Evidence beyond the scroll revealing that Yahweh assumes responsibility for Jerusalem's destruction concerns the use, repetition, and variation of five specific prophetic formulae:[496] (1) *ʾănî yhwh*, "I am Yahweh" (the self-introduction formula);[497] (2) *wĕyādĕʿû kî ʾănî yhwh*, "and they shall know that I am Yahweh" (the divine recognition formula);[498] (3) *kōh-ʾāmar ʾădōnay yhwh*, "Thus says the Lord Yahweh" (the messenger/citation formula);[499] (4) *wayĕhî debar yhwh ʾlay lēʾmōr*, "the word of the Lord came to me saying" (the word-event formula);[500] and (5) *nĕʾum ʾădōnāy yhwh*, "the declaration of the Lord Yahweh" (the signatory formula or prophetic utterance formula).[501] The preponderance of these embedded in prophecies of disaster reveals the concern to communicate divine speech, a point congruent with the scroll's divine origin and content. The formulae represent divine punctuation marks to Ezekiel's speeches.[502] They introduce the real speaker, show the purpose of the speech, declare a concrete reality,[503] and in some cases, represent Yahweh's "verbal signature" to the oral word of the

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[495] Bertil Albrektson, *History and the Gods* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1967), 53–67.

[496] For a full discussion on the forms of prophetic speech see Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (trans. H. Clayton White; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967). For the purposes of this study, however, the attempt is to understand these formulae in light of the MCL.

[497] See W. Zimmerli, *I am Yahweh* (trans. D. W. Stott; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 1–98. See also F. I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (JBLMS 14; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 40. All these studies are helpful for understanding the syntactical options of the phrase.

[498] This formula occurs approximately 78 times in Ezekiel and is linked primarily to Yahweh's punishment of Israel and the nations, although in several instances Israel's restoration is in view. For restoration texts, see chapter six.

[499] Ezekiel uses this formula about 120 times. It is either at the beginning or imbedded within the prophetic speech indicating the oneness of Ezekiel's words to that of Yahweh's.

[500] It appears approximately 50 times (in a pure or modified form) in Ezekiel, the most occurrences of it in all of the Old Testament. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 144.

[501] See D. Vetter, "*nĕʾum* Ausspruch," *THAT* 2:1–3; F. Baumgartel, "Die Formel *nĕʾum* Jahwe," *ZAW* 73 (1961): 277–290.

[502] Not all of Ezekiel's utterances are negative for Israel. A shift occurs after chapter 24.

[503] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 32.

prophet.[504] In essence the divine speeches point to Yahweh's sovereignty over the unfavorable circumstances announced for Israel.[505]

Although many texts from these prophetic formulations could be cited to illustrate Yahweh's anger and his responsibility in the matter of Jerusalem's demise, a deliberate selection is, obviously, necessary. With this in mind both Ezek 24:14 and Ezek 12:25 represent good exemplars. Ezek 24:14 is Yahweh's climactic and final response to Israel's intolerable rebellion and woeful misconduct described throughout the book. It is part of the larger narrative found in Ezek 24:1–14 containing the announcement that the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem (24:1–2). The entire chapter is, in many ways, a thematic book end to the events that commenced in chapter 4. Ezekiel's enactment of the siege in chapter 4 is now realized because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem (24:2). By way of a stunning allegory the passage declares that as Yahweh's agent, the king of Babylon will literally do to Jerusalem what Yahweh does to the filthy pot described in the allegory. Due to the violence and bloodshed in her midst, Ezekiel compares Jerusalem to an uncovered, unusable filthy pot. In the end, Yahweh builds a fire, pours the burned contents on the fire along with the pot to demonstrate the complete and utter destruction coming upon Jerusalem. Ezek 24:14 expresses the totality of Yahweh's declaration, his final, unambiguous response regarding the bloodshed in Jerusalem (24:6, 9). He says, "I am Yahweh; I have spoken. It [he] is coming, I will do [it]; I will not hold back, I will not spare, I will not be sorry; according to your ways and your doings, I will judge[506] you."[507]

Yahweh communicates two things by this response. First, the certainty of Jerusalem's end rests on the power of Yahweh's word, hence, the significance of the first part of the verse, "I am Yahweh, I have spoken (*ʾănî yhwh dibbartî*), and I will do (it)" (*wĕʿăśîtî*). Second, the certitude of Jerusalem's destruction involves a lack of restraint and emotion from Yahweh, thus, the powerful line up of three verbal phrases, "I will not hold back, I will not spare, I will not be sorry."

These verbs merit closer attention in this passage. "I will not hold back" (*lōʾ ʾepraʿ*) might also be translated "I will not refrain." The use of this verb announces an unrestrained act leading to judgment. The subsequent two verbs proceed to illustrate how that is possible. Mainly, unrestrained judg-

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[504] Ibid., 33. Block suggests that, *nĕʾum ʾădōnāy yhwh*, "the declaration of the Lord Yahweh" functions analogously to a signature on a written document.

[505] This also pertains to speeches with favorable circumstances announced for Israel. See chapters 33–48.

[506] The reading here follows *šĕpaṭtîk* and not *šĕpāṭûk* based on some of the Hebrew mss and ancient versions. This preferred reading might represent a case of assimilation to Ezek 7:3, 8.

[507] Block says of this verse that it is "the most emphatic affirmation of divine resolve in the book" (*Ezekiel 1–24*, 781).

ment materializes because Yahweh detaches himself emotionally from Israel, "I will not spare" (*lōʾ ʾāḥûs*) and "I will not be sorry" (*lōʾ ʾennāḥēm*). When understood together, these three verbs describe the irrevocability of Yahweh's plan to destroy. The last statement of the verse, "I will judge you" (*šĕpaṭṭîk*) with its use of the verb *špṭ* suggests the judicial nature of Yahweh's decision.[508] On account of their conduct his anger and judgment are justified.

The broader context of Ezek 12:25 is Ezek 12:21–25, Yahweh's response to the people's growing skepticism towards Ezekiel's ministry. Indeed, they were not convinced that his messages concerning destruction originated with Yahweh. In so doing they were intimating he was a false prophet (12:22). Yahweh's statement in Ezek 12:25 deals precisely with such doubts. His persuasive proverb counters theirs and definitively ends the discussion. He concludes "I am Yahweh, I will declare whatever word I declare and it will be done" (*ʾănî yhwh ʾădabbēr ʾēt ʾăšer ʾădabbēr dābār wĕyēʿāšeh*). The particular syntactical construction *ʾădabbēr ʾēt ʾăšer ʾădabbēr* has a specific meaning. It usually intensifies a statement of indefiniteness. In this context the grammar suggests that not one of Yahweh's words will fail; all will come to pass.[509] The word binds Yahweh to the designated action. Thus, the people can rest assured that Ezekiel is a true prophet and that his words of destruction about the land of Israel are one and the same as Yahweh's.

Thus, Ezek 24:14 and 12:25 respectively underscore the certainty of Yahweh's word. Both texts utilize the formulae *ʾănî yhwh dibbartî*, "I am Yahweh, I have spoken."[510] The phrase represents an expansion of the basic self-introduction formula *ʾănî yhwh*, "I am Yahweh" so prevalent throughout the book. Of this particular formula Zimmerli states that the divine revelation "is in no way merely a word. It is a word which affects an event."[511] The plan to destroy is signed, sealed, and delivered by Yahweh's spoken word to Ezekiel, something which cannot be changed. Yahweh binds himself to his word which guarantees its fulfillment. Together these two texts show Yahweh's angry proclamations are definitive and unchangeable. They bear his signature. In this way Yahweh assigns himself

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[508] The same statement appears in three other places (Ezek 7:3; 18:30; 33:20).
[509] G. S. Ogden, "Idem per Idem: Its Use and Meaning," *JSOT* 53 (1992): 112.
[510] The formula *ʾănî yhwh dibbartî*, "I am Yahweh, I have spoken" occurs eleven times in the book. The majority of the occurrences are found in the oracles against Judah and Jerusalem: Ezek 17:21, 24; 21:22, 37 [Eng. 17, 32]; 22:14; 24:14. The certainty of Yahweh's word that brings destruction applies also to foreign nations: Tyre (Ezek 26:14), and Egypt (Ezek 30:12). But the formula is also used with respect to Israel's restoration (Ezek 34:24; 36:36; 37:14).
[511] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 176.

responsibility for Jerusalem's end. Yahweh's word, like Enlil's, is unchangeable, irresistible, and cannot be revoked.[512]

Yahweh's Gaze

Along with unchangeable words of destruction, Yahweh's anger translates into a merciless gaze. This represents another way Yahweh assumes responsibility for Jerusalem's end. The phrase *lō tāḥôs ʿēnî lō ʾĕḥmôl*, "My eye will show no pity nor will I show mercy" indicates this. It is repeated six times in the book and, along with the divine word motif, also determines Jerusalem's fate.[513] Eyes with no pity show the hardened nature of Yahweh towards Israel. Yahweh's eyes will not grieve or shed a tear over Israel's situation.[514] That eyes are connected with one's emotions is seen by the pairing of *hûs* with *ʿayin*.[515] Yahweh's uncompassionate gaze, one void of pity or mercy is lethal for Israel.[516] It could be likened to Enlil's angry gaze on Sumer in the laments.[517] In both cases the deities' eyes reflect a certain sentiment producing extremely negative results.

SUMMARY

Thus, Yahweh, like Enlil, is angered. He assumes responsibility for the destruction through unchangeable words of destruction and a merciless gaze. In this way Enlil imagery seems to be applied to Yahweh's characterization in the book of Ezekiel.[518] However, even though it is described as extreme in places, Yahweh's anger, unlike Enlil's, is not whimsical. Yahweh's relentless fury and proclamations of disaster are directly connected to the fault he finds with the city, people, and land, a point to which I shall now turn.

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[512] The "word of Enlil" cannot be revoked (LU 150–151; LSUr 57; 163–164; 365; CA 99; UL 3:27; 12:38). LSUr 364–370 says, "the verdict of the assembly cannot be turned back, the word commanded by Enlil knows no overturning … Enlil alters not the command which he had issued" (LU 169).

[513] Three of the occurrences are found in 5:11; 7:4, 9. Three are found in the vision of abandonment (8:18; 9:5, 10). With the exception of Ezek 9:5, Yahweh is the subject.

[514] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 210.

[515] S. Wagner, *TDOT* 4:271–277.

[516] See Ezek 20:17 where Yahweh asserts the opposite concerning his eyes. He states, "Nevertheless my eye spared them, and I did not destroy them or make a full end of them in the wilderness."

[517] "The city, as if An had cursed it, it alone he destroyed. As if Enlil had glared angrily at it, Eridu, the shrine Abzu, bowed low" (EL 1:25–26). See also, EL 7:4.

[518] This is not unlike a claim made by others on Ezek 1 with respect to Marduk theology being applied to Yahweh. For a full discussion see Uehlinger and Müller Trufaut, "Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography: Attempts at Further Refinement," 163–164.

YAHWEH ASSIGNS RESPONSIBILITY TO ISRAEL FOR JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

The house of Judah is characterized in Ezekiel by her rebellion. She is *bêt mĕrî*, "a rebellious house," and the book is filled with references indicating this posture.[519] The people, city, and entire land have been accused by Yahweh of wrongdoing, the specific nature of which will be discussed below. Evidence of Yahweh's accusations throughout the book is keenly seen. Ultimately, Yahweh's reputation has suffered severely. He must act. As a result, the nation bears a heavy weight of responsibility accounting for its destruction. Ezekiel's use of *ʿāwōn*, "guilt," and *tôʿēbōt* "abominations;" the phrase *yaʿan … lākēn*, "because … therefore;" and his use of historical retrospect[520] represent substantial evidence of the nation's responsibility and guilt. The book, therefore, emphasizes their faults.

The use of ʿāwōn and tôʿēbōt

Ezekiel uses the noun *ʿāwōn* more than any other other exilic prophet. The term *ʿāwōn* is often translated as "iniquity" or "guilt" and is the "central term for human sin, guilt, and fate in prophetic and cultic writings."[521] The noun can refer to either the past misdeed (sin or guilt) or to the consequences for the misdeed (punishment or ruin). This ambiguity notwithstanding, the notion of *ʿāwōn* always presupposes the "act-consequence schema" and the latter is especially noticeable in Ezekiel.[522]

The *āwōn* texts in Ezekiel can be divided into two major categories: collective and individual. These texts reveal who the accused are and typically show the nature of the accusation. With respect to individual guilt it is exemplified in the wicked person (Ezek 3:18–19), the son or father (18:17–20, 30), and in the king of Judah (21:29–32 [Eng. 21:24–27]). But the book also reflects collective guilt by speaking about the house of Israel and Judah (Ezek 4:4–6, 17), sister Sodom (16:49), the elders (14:3–7), and Levites. The guilty parties are the city, land, and people. Guilt or iniquity as described throughout the book is born by Ezekiel (4:4–6), is a cause for stumbling (7:19, 14:10; 18:30), is great (9:9), is remembered (21:23–24, 28–29), causes grief and shame (24:23; 7:16; 43:10), and eventually brings death.

But of what is the house of Israel and Judah guilty? At times, guilt is associated with unidentified infractions indicated by the term *tôʿēbōt*, "abominations." It is a general term used widely for various kinds of offenses or offensive acts in the Hebrew Bible, offenses which include cultic

[519] Eg. Ezek 2:3, 5, 6, 7, 8; 3:9, 26, 27.
[520] Ezek 16, 20, 23.
[521] S. Koch, *TDOT* 1:546.
[522] Ibid., 551.

and non cultic categories. It is not insignificant that Ezekiel uses the term more generously than other prophets.[523] Although *tôʿēbōt* texts are not usually connected to *ʿāwōn* texts in Ezekiel, his generous use of the former term shows the repetitious nature of their offenses. At other times, Ezekiel is more precise in establishing guilt due to specific infractions. An analysis of Ezekiel's use of the phrase *yaʿan … lākēn*, "because … therefore," helps to determine the nature of their guilt.

The use of yaʿan … lākēn

The repeated indictment/judgment sequence "because … therefore," *yaʿan … lākēn* prefaces seven prophecies of destruction against Israel.[524] In the grammatical sequence *yaʿan … lākēn*, "because … therefore," a clear cause and effect pattern exists.[525] The word *yaʿan* stands as an introduction to the problem (indicates the situation), whereas the word *lākēn* alerts the reader of Yahweh's immanent response to the problem that was introduced by *yaʿan*. As March points out, "Because the sin of Israel is so manifest and because God will not allow such conditions to go unchallenged, then with great confidence one can expect God's intervention."[526] Ezek 5:7–11 is a good example. In these five verses the *yaʿan … lākēn* sequence is repeated three times:

> Vs 7: *yaʿan* you are more turbulent than the nations … *lākēn* I am against you
> Vs 9: *yaʿan* of all your abominations … *lākēn* fathers shall eat their sons
> Vs 11: *yaʿan* you have defiled my sanctuary … *lākēn* I will cut you down

In each case, a cause and effect pattern prevails making Israel's problem quite clear. Yet the phrase also provides information on how Yahweh will respond. The turbulence is partially described starting in Ezek 5:6. Jerusalem has rejected the statutes of Yahweh making her worse than the surrounding nations (Ezek 5:6–7). Furthermore, they have defiled the temple

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[523] It appears 42 times in Ezekiel.
[524] Ezek 5:7–11; 13:8–13, 20–23; 16:35–37; 22:19; 23:35; 34:7–9. The same construction is used in the oracles against the nations (25:3–4, 6–7, 8–9, 12–13, 15–16; 26:2–3; 28:6–7; 29:6–10; 36:1–7, 13–14).
[525] But see Ezek 15:8; 21:29; 31:10; 34:20–21 where Ezekiel introduces the effect first, then the cause, "therefore … because." On account of this March notes that it is not a grammatical necessity to have *yaʿan* precede *lākēn*; W. E. March, "Laken: Its Functions and Meaning," in *Rhetorical Criticism*: *Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (eds. J. J. Jackson and M. Kessler; PTMS 1; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1974), 256–284.
[526] March, "Laken: Its Functions and Meaning," 274.

with their *šiqqûṣîm*,[527] "detestable things/objects or images" and with their *tôʿēbōt* "abominations," cultic infractions which include idolatry (5:9, 11). All this explains Yahweh's unrelenting disposition and anger towards Jerusalem which is summarized in Ezek 5:13.

The first and last part of the verse *ʾappî* and *ḥămātî*, "my fury" envelope the threefold statement within, namely, Yahweh's anger will be spent (*kālâ*), which means "to finish" or "to come to an end."[528] It will also be "vented" or "pacified" (*ḥăniḥôtî*).[529] Finally, Yahweh will be satisfied (*hitnaḥēm*). The reflexive hithpael stem of *nḥm*, "to satisfy oneself," shows that Yahweh personally receives satisfaction by venting on Israel.[530] This is a furious unleashing of Yahweh's wrath expressed by juxtaposing these verbs. When Yahweh repeatedly comments that his divine wrath has come to an end, it certainly signals an extreme measure, one that leads to, and is expressed in, vicious and inhumane treatment of Jerusalem. Ezek 5:14–17 exemplifies desolation, mockery, horror, taunt, famine, savagery, pestilence, and sword.

Here in Ezek 5:13 Yahweh's rage seems to be uncontrolled and unleashed in indiscriminate ways. Although clearly connected to Israel's provocation, it is especially fueled by Yahweh's desire for name recognition, a point enveloped in the same verse. Driven by divine passion for name recognition he acts, "they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken in my passion, when I spend my fury upon them" (5:13). The recognition formula coupled with the term *qinʾâ* is best translated as "passion."[531] Yahweh is enraged and resentful towards Israel, the relationship has been violated.[532] The fact that Yahweh acts so that his name will be known is not an isolated incident in Ezekiel.[533] His reputation has been tampered with as a result of their continual misconduct. The recognition formula attached to Yahweh's promised action, therefore, secures his vindication.[534]

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[527] The term probably derives from the verb *qûṣ* meaning "to feel a loathing at" (*BDB*, 880, 1055). Ezekiel uses "detestable images" eight times; five of which refer to idolatrous practices (5:11; 7:20; 20:7, 30; 37:23). Outside Ezekiel the term is likewise used for detested idolatrous practices (Deut 29:17; 2 Kgs 23:24; Jer 7:30; 16:18; 32:34).

[528] The LXX omits *waḥăniḥôtî ḥămātî*. Ezek 16:42, however, retains the phrase. As such MT should be followed.

[529] With the Hiphil the root *nūaḥ* means "to pacify" or "to satisfy" (*KB*, 679).

[530] The MT adds the Hithpael verb not found in LXX. Cf. 16:42. The sense of this reflexive verb compares to the use of the Niphal. When Yahweh vents his wrath on an enemy this is equated with avenging himself on his foes as in Isa 1:24.

[531] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 115. See also Ezek 8:3, 5; 16:38, 42; 23:25 for Yahweh's passion.

[532] G. Saurer, *THAT* 2:647–650.

[533] See references above. Also Alex Luc, "A Theology of Ezekiel: God's Name and Israel's History," *JETS* 26/2 (1983): 137–143 for the suggestion that Israel's entire history is directly tied to Yahweh's concern for name recognition.

[534] Ibid., 140.

Thus the indictment/judgment sequence "because … therefore," *yaʿan … lākēn* illustrated from Ezek 5:7–13 reveals that Israel is guilty, specifically of rejecting Yahweh's statutes and idolatry. Consequently, his reputation is on the line. This has angered Yahweh. Their behavior has provoked an unavoidable confrontation with Yahweh. But the book of Ezekiel highlights the nature of Israel's guilt from another angle as well.

The use of historical retrospect

Ezekiel's use of Israelite history is another way guilt surfaces in the book. Together Ezek 16, 20, and 23 are part of the larger block of narrative consisting of chapters 16–23. The entire section comprising chapters 16–19 and 20–23 deals extensively with the issue of guilt. These chapters go into sordid details about Israel's guilt and shame using a variety of stunning images. From a literary perspective, chapters 16 and 23 serve as metaphorical book ends on the theme in this section. On the one end, Israel's past is narrated through the metaphor of the unfaithful wife. Jerusalem is portrayed as an unfaithful wife who gives her affections to numerous others (chapter 16). On the other end, through the metaphor of the unfaithful sisters, Jerusalem is portrayed as a woman desirous of love, yet one unsatisfied with what Yahweh has to offer (chapter 23).

Sandwiched in between are chapters 17–20 which speak of Israel's past and present guilt through a variety of literary means.[535] Even though Israel's guilt has previously been discussed, here in these eight chapters (16–23) Israel's culpability provides the main rationale for the city's demise. In this way these chapters are climactic. Israel's history serves as a record that leads to self-indictment. From birth to adulthood (chapter 16) the individual histories of Samaria and Jerusalem condemn the nation as a whole (chapter 23). Their guilt leads to a confrontation with Yahweh.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 replays Israel's past by use of vivid metaphor. Twice the pattern *yaʿan … lākēn* is used (16:35, 37, 43). And in Ezek 16:15–22, 36 one finds the term for idolatry (*tĭznūth*) and abominations (*tôʿēbōt*). In chapter 16 Jerusalem is full of *ʿāwōn* by association with her sister Sodom (16:49). Jerusalem's abominations are vividly described in Ezek 16:15–22; 36 which include references to idolatry.[536] Thus through metaphor and the use of the standard phrases already discussed, Jerusalem's guilt is undeniable.

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[535] Allegory (chapter 17), proverb (chapter 18), dirge (chapter 19), and historical narrative (chapter 20).

[536] Ezek 16:2, 50–51 are ambiguous references to abominations.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 recollects Israelite history without the use of metaphor. Yahweh makes it clear that in every phase of her history the nation rebelled. While they were rebelling he exercised control and patience when they were in Egypt and in the wilderness, and did not pour out his wrath. He refrained in order to guard his reputation (20:9, 14, 22). However, things have changed with the nation at present. Yahweh is unable to withhold his wrath and thus he announces judgment (20:35–44). This is on account of idolatry. Indeed, the whole house of Israel, the nation then and now, is charged with idolatry and improper worship, something that angered Yahweh.[537] In fact, there is a concentration of vocabulary for idolatry here in chapter 20 as well as in the section comprised of 20–23.[538] Idolatry has always angered Yahweh but now he reaches his boiling point. His wrath is about to be dispensed. Thus chapter 20 demonstrates Jerusalem's guilt not by using the terms *ʿāwōn* or *tôʿēbōt*, nor with the indictment/judgment pattern *yaʿan … lākēn*, but by paraphrasing the nation's history, a history best characterized by idolatry. So guilt is implicit and, again, tied to idolatry.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 is a literary counterpart to 16 in that both describe Israel's past with metaphorical language. The chapter describes two depraved sisters, Oholah and Oholibah (Samaria and Jerusalem respectively) who carry their prostitution to unspeakable levels. However, Oholibah's depravity far surpassed that of Oholah demanding a response from Yahweh (23:19). The metaphor here utilizes the terms *tiznût*, "harlotries" and *gillûlîm*, "images" but neither *ʿāwōn*, "guilt," or *tôʿēbōt*, "abominations."[539] It does have the

[537] In Ezek 20:7, 8, 30–31 the terms are *gillûlîm* and *šiqqûṣîm*. In Ezek 20:16, 18, 24 the term is *gillûlîm*. Ezek 20:28–29 highlights improper worship, and 20:32 concerns worship of wood and stone; 20:30 refers twice to *gillûlîm*.

[538] Ezek 21:15 speaks of worshipping wood; 22:3–4 mentions *gillûlîm*; 22:9 highlights improper worship; and 23:7, 27, 30, 37, 39, 49 include *gillûlîm* and harlotries (*znh*).

[539] See also Ezek 23:7, 30, 37, 39, and 49. Ezekiel uses *gillûlîm*, "images" 39 times with a concentration of it in chapters 20–23, a section that exposes and highlights Israel's collective responsibility for the destruction. It seems that the word, given its two different possible etymologies, *gal/gālal* "to be round" (characteristic of stones) and *gēl/gēlēl*, "excrement," might reflect Ezekiel's intentions best. That is to say, with the use of this term a double entendre may have been intended by Ezekiel. It shows Ezekiel's demeanor towards Israel's idols. He designates them as excrement. See Daniel Bodi for a full discussion of the word's origin, vocalization, etymology, and meaning in "Les *gillûlîm* chez Ézéchiel et dans l'Ancien Testament, et Les différentes pratiques cultuelles associées à ce terme," ***RB*** 100 (1993): 481–510. Ezek 6 makes it clear that improper worship was conducted on high places, hills, and under trees. It also uses the term *gillûlîm*, "images" three times (6:4, 5, 6), a favored term by Ezekiel to speak about images or idols. Chapter 6, with its emphasis on idolatry, seems to be at the heart of Yahweh's accusation even though other ambiguous

indictment/judgment sequence *yaʿan … lākēn* built into it at two places (Ezek 23:30, 35). As such Ezek 23, along with chapters 20 and 16 indicate Israel's guilt in no uncertain terms.

SUMMARY

It appears from Ezekiel's recollection and description of Israelite history, along with the sequence *yaʿan … lākēn*, and the use of *ʿāwōn*, "guilt" and *tôʿēbōt*, "abominations" that idolatry is at the heart of Israel's culpability and Yahweh's accusations. The guilt of the people, city, and land is established primarily on the grounds of idolatry.[540] Ultimately, Yahweh deems the house of Israel responsible because they profaned his name, marred his reputation. By his own admission, Yahweh articulates the concern he had for his name (36:20–21). Perhaps Yahweh summarizes Israel's responsibility best by his characterization of the nation's actions in the following verses: "They defiled my holy name by their abominations … now let them put away their idolatry …" (Ezek 43:8–9); "But my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols …" (Ezek 20:39); "But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned by holy name … but I had concern for my holy name …" (36:20–21). To underscore the importance of Yahweh receiving name recognition, the text shows Israel's culpability with respect to idolatry, a personal affront and barrier to achieving that recognition. Indeed, idolatry directly challenges Yahweh's name recognition. The people are in great need of reform; hence, the issue of human transgression is a very real one in Ezekiel.

The previous discussion has shown that the book of Ezekiel seems to assign dual responsibility for the upcoming destruction. On the one hand, Yahweh's anger which translates into irrevocable words of destruction, an uncompassionate gaze, and his concern for name recognition are responsible. Yet on the other, Israel is held responsible due to provocation through

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offensive acts or abominations are also mentioned (6:11; 7:3–4, 8–9). Ezek 9:9 summarizes collective *ʿāwōn* concerning the people, land, and city: "The guilt (*ʿāwōn*) of the *house of Israel and Judah* is exceedingly great; the *land* is full of blood, and the *city* full of injustice…" This text describes misdeeds that fill the land with blood. The latter probably refers to social and political misdeeds. But it is a summative statement that, in context, includes the cultic offenses enumerated in chapter 8. The offenses listed there clearly indicate that idolatry is specific to the abominations being committed in Yahweh's house (8:17). Guilt is not mentioned in chapter 8, only abominations. But in Ezek 9:4 guilt is mentioned along with other ambiguous offensive acts or *tôʿēbōt*, "abominations," in this section (Ezek 11:18, 21). Thus, the people, land, and city are guilty due to acts of injustice, but also idolatry (Ezek 8).

[540] See Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 29. There are approximately 80 references in Ezekiel where Yahweh charges Israel with idolatry. This is evidenced by the distribution of idolatry terminology throughout the book. Additionally, several summary statements at the end of the book reveal that their idolatry brought about the destruction. See for example, Ezek 20:39; 36:18; 43:7–9.

idolatry (profaning his name). This dual responsibility stands in stark contrast to the laments. In fact, Ezekiel seems to go out of his way to express the nation's guilt in order to uphold the judicial nature of Yahweh's decision to destroy.[541] One reasonable way to account for this could be the differences between Israelite and Sumerian theological viewpoints. The Mesopotamian theological perspective did not usually perceive disaster in terms of the sin concept. Divine wrath is linked to personal sins of commission or omission, as evidenced in several prayers. Likewise, the "sin" of the people angered Marduk, resulting in divine abandonment. From an Israelite theological perspective, however, disaster (either corporately or individually) was directly connected to sin. Perhaps the difference concerns the adaptation of the prophetic concept of sin. The consensus among scholars is that Judah's guilt and subsequent destruction described in the book is governed by the covenantal curses.[542] However, I would argue that the mode of presentation of these covenantal concepts is presented according to a *specific* literary framework. It is possible that, given the scroll, and Ezekiel's possible awareness of the Mesopotamian sources, that the presentation of the material in the book represents an adaptation to Ezekiel's Babylonian context and the Palestinian context of his fellow exiles.

This difference might simply be accounted for also because Ezekiel does not formally belong to the lament genre category. Even though I am suggesting the book contains a lament sub-genre due to the scroll, not everything has to fit neatly into that category. In addition, although Yahweh is sometimes characterized like Enlil in the laments, he is not Enlil. Ezekiel makes a clear distinction between the two deities. Yahweh is not whimsical and capricious. He, thus, has a rationale for bringing destruction to the nation. Now that responsibility has been properly assigned for the upcoming destruction, we can turn to the logical consequences of Yahweh's anger and Israel's guilt, Yahweh's departure from Jerusalem.

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[541] Perhaps Ezekiel's eagerness to justify Yahweh's actions has something to do with what appears to be a popular, yet incorrect, perception of Yahweh. The people may have been characterizing Yahweh like a Mesopotamian deity such as Enlil. The viewpoint of the people communicated elsewhere in the book reveals their own accusation towards Yahweh. He is not just. They perceive they are in the hands of a capricious, unjust god whose actions are unpredictable (Ezek 18:25, 29; 33:17–20). They also have the notion that their sufferings are due to the sins of their fathers; thus, they have absolved themselves from any responsibility. Correctives to such a belief might be Ezekiel's justification of Yahweh's actions and his unequivocal declaration of Israel's guilt. Indeed, Yahweh's own response to their accusation deliberately sets the record straight. He has not acted without cause, nor does he delight in the death of anyone, not even the wicked (Ezek 14:23, 18:23, 30). In this way, the contrast could possibly function polemically against blurring the lines between Yahweh and any Mesopotamian deity.

[542] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 49; Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 42–43; Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, xxxvi.

DIVINE ABANDONMENT

As discussed in chapter one, divine abandonment is an important feature in the laments. This is particularly evident in the vivid language and imagery associated with the theme. Noteworthy is the avian imagery used to portray the departed deities. There is no indication, however, as to why the deities depart. They are angered, but the poets offer no rationale. In addition, the results of divine abandonment (namely, chaos and destruction) permeate the poems.[543] As such, divine abandonment provides the background for the main subject matter of the laments, the fall of major cities in southern Mesopotamia of the Ur III dynasty (2112–2004 B.C.). The cities' demise is what gives these documents their mournful tone and genre classification, "city lament." The point is that the fall of these cities cannot be understood apart from divine abandonment.

Divine abandonment is encountered throughout much of Ezekiel's material.[544] Evidence for this derives from the language and imagery associated with the theme throughout the book. Especially noteworthy for my purposes is how Yahweh's departure from the temple in Jerusalem has avian-like qualities. As highlighted above, Ezekiel, unlike the laments, gives a clear reason for Yahweh's departure. He is angered due to Israel's provocations.[545] Moreover, Yahweh's departure results in wide-scale destruction and chaos, something Ezekiel describes in detail.[546] Accordingly, the focus in what follows will be Ezek 8–11 since it is arguably the most dramatic depiction of divine abandonment in the Old Testament.[547] In the vision, abandonment is explained and described as God's physical removal in avian-like imagery. He leaves at his own pace, slowly and reluctantly. I shall argue that the parallels with Sumerian literature provide us with a framework to rethink the imagery associated with Yahweh's departure in Ezek 8–11.

EZEKIEL 8–11: THE LITERARY FRAMEWORK

These four chapters appear to be organized according to an intentional pattern. In the beginning of the section the *kĕbôd yhwh* is in Jerusalem

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[543] Although this is clear in the laments, it is also illustrated in other Mesopotamian literature. In the Neo-Babylonian Poem of Erra which discusses the fall and restoration of Babylon, when encouraged by Erra to leave his throne for statue repairs, Marduk reminds Erra of the destruction that ensued when he was angry and left his throne once before (L. Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* [SANE I; Malibu: Undena, 1977], 132–148).

[544] For key works on divine abandonment see, Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, 16–41, 98–114; Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, 9–21; Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 183–218.

[545] In Ezekiel sin is the cause and divine abandonment/destruction is the effect. In the city laments divine abandonment is the cause and destruction is the effect.

[546] See chapter five.

[547] For other images of abandonment beyond Ezek 8–11 see, below.

(8:3–4). At the conclusion the *kābôd* has departed from the city (11:22–23). There is a clear beginning and end indicated by the location of the *kābôd* in the vision. The tour of the *tôʿēbôt* "abominations" in the temple provides an internal consistency from which the chapters in this section are linked.[548] The abominations are what lead Yahweh to act. He mercilessly adds to Israel's defilements, and then proceeds to abandon his temple as well as the city.[549] The intervening material linking chapters 8–9 and 10–11 corresponds overall to an A-B-B-A pattern:[550]

A 8 = Vision[551]
- 1–4 transportation to Jerusalem and the statue
- 5–6 the statue and alienation from the sanctuary
- 7–13 pictures of animals: 25 men and Jaazaniah
  - elders think Yahweh abandoned the land
- 14–15 women worshipping Tammuz
- 16–18 men worshipping the sun

B 9 = Execution[552]
- 1–2 executioners and the scribe
- 3–7 glory, cherub, executioners, and scribe
- 8–10 executioners
- 11 scribe

[548] Ezek 8:5–18; 9:1–2a; 11:1a.
[549] Ezek 8:18; 9:5, 7, 10; 11:6–7a, 23.
[550] For variations on the chiastic framework of these chapters, see F. L. Hossfeld, "Die Tempelvision Ez 8–11 im Licht unterschiedlicher methodischer Zugrange," in *Ezekiel and His Book* (ed. J. Lust; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 156–157; M. Greenberg, "The Vision of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 8–11: A Holistic Interpretation," in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events* (eds. J. L. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel; New York: Ktav, 1980), 150; H. Parunak, "The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel's *marʾôt ʾelōhîm*," *JBL* 99 (1980): 66–69; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 272.
[551] Ezek 8:3b and 11:1 correspond with respect to the spirit moving Ezekiel around (*wattiššsāʾ ʾōtî rûaḥ*). Likewise, 8:2–4 and 11:23–24 show how the unit is connected at the beginning and end on account of Ezekiel's location. When the vision commences, he is brought from his house amongst the elders in vision to Jerusalem, and when it ends he returns to the exiles in Chaldea.
[552] There is a verbal connection between 8:18 and 9:1 on account of *bĕʾoznay*.

B′ 10 = Vision[553]
1–5 scribe and cherubim
6–8 scribe, cherub, and cherubim
9–15 cherubim and wheels
15–17 cherubim and wheels
18–19 cherubim
20–22 cherubim (cf. Ezek 1)

A′ 11 = Execution
1–4 25 men and Jaazaniah, and Palatiel
5–13 execution and Palatiel dies
14–16 alienation from sanctuary
17–21 execution or restoration
22–23 glory exits
24–25 transportation to exile

The ideas in the vision are enveloped with the vision/execution pattern. A and A′ relate to each other in that what Ezekiel envisioned in chapter 8 finds execution in chapter 11. B and B′ follow a reverse pattern of execution/vision. The cohesion is maintained thematically by most of the parts in this section.[554] Thus, the thematic framework of Ezek 8–11 is important because it situates abandonment prominently. Abandonment explains Jerusalem's annihilation due to Yahweh's anger over Israel's provocations.[555]

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[553] Ezek 9:11, where the man clothed in linen is speaking, is joined to 10:2 where the man clothed in linen is spoken to, indicated by *hāʾîš lĕbūš habbaddîm*.

[554]Admittedly, the cohesion of Ezek 8–11 is complicated at several junctures. The most obvious is the interpretation of Ezekiel's inaugural vision discussed in 10:1–22. Likewise, the picture of abandonment blurs at times with the mention of particular people (8:11a and 11:1b), the concern for the remnant (9:8; 11:13), the killing outside the city (11:7b, 9–12), and the conflicting claims of the exiles vs. those remaining in Jerusalem (11:14–21). Block enumerates the problems quite well even though he treats 8–11 as a unit. He observes that the content and style could lead one to identify three distinct visionary events: (1) the departure of the glory (8:8; 9:3; 10:1–22; 11:22–23); (2) the abominations being perpetrated in the temple (8:5–18); (3) the judgment inflicted on Jerusalem (9:1–2, 4–11). Likewise, the insertions of a disputation account and salvation oracle in 11:1–3 and 11:14–21, respectively, are disruptive. Furthermore, he notes the inconsistencies relative to the logic and chronology of chapter 11 with the rest of the vision (Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 273). Although these inconsistencies are not primary to the story line of abandonment, they don't necessarily void the argument of an overall cohesion. For an argument against the unity of this section, see B. Vawter and L. J. Hoppe, *A New Heart: A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 63.

[555] So, too, Block (*Ezekiel 1–24*, 272) acknowledges that the single motif of divine abandonment dominates the vision. Although Greenberg agrees that the theme of divine abandonment is concentrated at the center of the vision, he designates divine abandonment as an "auxiliary theme" (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 205).

Ezekiel 8:1–6 Introduction to the True Temple Owner

Ezekiel is transported from exile to Jerusalem to witness various activities at Yahweh's temple. More specifically, he is taken to Jerusalem to witness Yahweh's departure from his earthly residence. Upon his arrival at the temple entrance (8:1–4), two images capture his attention, the "image of jealousy" (*sēmel haqqin'â hammaqneh*) and the "glory of the God of Israel" (*kĕbôd 'ĕlōhê yiśrā'ēl*). With respect to the latter, in verse 4 and in the entire vision, Yahweh is represented by his *kābôd*.[556] The term is mentioned eight times in chapters 8–11. In four places the designation is *kĕbôd yhwh* (Ezek 10:4[2x]; 10:18, 11:23).[557] And in four other texts *kābôd* refers more specifically to the *kĕbôd 'ĕlōhê yiśrā'ēl* (8:4; 9:3; 10:19; 11:22).[558] In Ezek 8:4, Ezekiel describes the *kĕbôd 'ĕlōhê yiśrā'ēl* as something on par with *kĕbôd yhwh* which he experienced back in the valley (Ezek 3:23); and with the human figure in Ezek 1:28. The glory is a man. Furthermore, the designations seem to be used in a manner parallel to each other.[559] That two distinct designations are used warrants further explanation.

The first mention of the more specific designation *kĕbôd 'ĕlōhê yiśrā'ēl* in Ezek 8:4 is not without significance. Prior to witnessing all the temple abominations Ezekiel simultaneously sees the *kĕbôd 'ĕlōhê yiśrā'ēl* along with the "seat" or "statue" of "the image of jealousy" (*môšab sēmel haqqin'â hammaqneh*).[560] The context indicates that the two images stand

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[556] Other literature on *kābôd* includes J. T. Strong, "God's *Kāvôd*: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel" in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (eds. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 69–88; T. N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (trans. Frederick H. Cryer; ConBOT 18; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982); T. W. Mann, *The Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions: The Typology of Exaltation* (JHNES 9; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977); J. Morgenstern, "Biblical Theophanies," *ZA* 25 (1911): 139–193; H. G. May, "The Departure of the Glory of Yahweh," *JBL* 56 (1937): 309–332. Although the aforementioned sources represent several fine works concerning the *kābôd* theology in Israelite traditions, Kutsko's analysis of it in Ezekiel represents a major contribution to the discussion (Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 87–100). He first reviews the priestly tradition (79–87) and then compares it to the presentation of the *kābôd* theology in Ezekiel. He shows that the form of the presence is more anthropomorphic and graphic than that of the P tradition (87–91). He also notes that there is a real presence in Jerusalem and a real presence in exile (3, 91). And just as the presence was mobile in the wilderness, Ezekiel's *kābôd* emphasizes mobility. He concludes that Ezekiel uniquely develops the priestly theological tradition of the *kābôd* to depict the complimentary aspects of God's absence and presence (80). "Thus, the *kābôd* theology in Ezekiel served dual purposes; it provided an effective image of God's absence from Jerusalem and an effective image of God's presence in exile" (91).

[557] Outside the vision the designation appears in Ezek 1:28; 3:12, 23; 43:4; 44:4.

[558] This designation is found elsewhere only in Ezek 43:2.

[559] Ezek 10:18–19; 11:22–23.

[560] Based on Exod 20:5 and Deut 4:15–24, scholars typically understand the "image" as an idol of another god in Yahweh's temple, something that provokes Yahweh's jealousy. More

in opposition to each other. The fuller designation *kĕbôd ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl* seems to express Yahweh's ownership and sovereignty with respect to the temple. The temple is Yahweh's. Yahweh's residence is in the Jerusalem temple. Yahweh is Israel's God. This stands in stark contrast to "the image of jealousy." The latter is portrayed as an intruder. The repetition of *kĕbôd ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl* in Ezek 9:3, 10:19, and 11:22 serves as a continual reminder throughout the vision of Yahweh's supreme ownership of the temple and city.[561] Thus, *kābôd* in Ezek 8–11 is a manifestation of God, and the manifestation of his *kābôd* in the Jerusalem temple illustrates his ownership of that building and the people associated with that land.

The *kābôd* proceeds to tell Ezekiel that the competition with the "image of jealousy" was causing a rift in the relationship; *ben ʾādām hărōʾeh ʾattâ*, "Son of man, do you see" what the house of Israel is doing, *lĕroḥŏqâ mēʿal miqdāšî*,[562] "setting a distance from my sanctuary" (8:4–6)?[563] What this means is explained in the subsequent material (Ezek 8:5–18). Accordingly, the estrangement is due to what the people are doing, all of it having to do with abominable and off-putting substitutes for Yahweh. F. M. Cross understands the use of *rḥq* in this verse from a legal point of view where the term involves the cessation of rights or property.[564] In this way, those who are engaged in the temple abominations have forfeited "the right to participate in the temple cult and, in particular, to receive its benefits."[565]

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specifically, some equate the image with an Asherah idol; W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* (trans. Coslett Quin; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 122; H. C. Lutzky, "On the 'Image of Jealousy' Ezekiel viii 3, 5," *VT* 46 (1996): 124. M. Odell challenges this view in her recent commentary. She argues based on Phoenician and Punic cognates that the term refers also to human beings. As such, the *sēmel* of Ezek 8:3–5 was a votive statue and not an idol (*Ezekiel*, 104–107).

[561] Ezek 9:3; 10:19; 11:22. The use of the designation in Ezek 43:2 offers even more insight. In the final vision of the book, *kĕbôd ʾĕlōhê yisrāʾēl* returns to a new temple and a renewed people. The designation reflects Yahweh's seal of approval and stamp of ownership on the reconstituted people and temple.

[562] Ezek 11:16 is the only occurrence of *lĕroḥŏqâ* before *mēʿal.* But *rāḥaq mēʿal* is found in Ezek 11:15; 44:10; Jer 2:5.

[563] English translations usually have "to drive me far from my sanctuary?" or "that I should go far from my sanctuary" (*RSV*; *NRSV*; *NAS*; *KJV*). But the Hebrew contains neither a subject nor object allowing for some ambiguity in determining who is far away from Yahweh's sanctuary. Has Yahweh distanced himself from his sanctuary or have the people? This has led some to suggest that the referent is to Yahweh's abandonment of his sanctuary (Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 287; Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 29, 99). Others suggest that it likely refers to the people who are distancing themselves from the sanctuary or even to an altar that might have been built at the temple entrance (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 240; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 169).

[564] F. M. Cross, "A Papyrus Recording a Divine Legal Decision and the Root *rḥq* in Biblical and Near Eastern Legal Usage," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 319.

[565] Ibid.

Thus, Cross translates the phrase "to forfeit claim on my sanctuary."[566] Following Cross, it seems they have legally forfeited all the rights and privileges associated with the temple. In a derivative sense, however, this legal separation leads to a spatial separation. Indeed, one of the major benefits associated with Yahweh's temple is enjoying the divine presence.[567] Hence, with the use of *rḥq* a *double entendre* seems to obtain in Ezek 8:6.

Ezekiel 8:7–18 Introduction to Violations in Yahweh's Temple and his Anger

Ezekiel is then taken on a tour of the temple. The private tour is significant. It continues to reinforce that Yahweh is the rightful owner of the building, none other. As Ezekiel is escorted through the ground plan, it shows how Yahweh's temple has been violated.[568] He is brought in to see the cultic abominations of the elders (8:7–11). The 70 elders engaged in idolatry were affirming Yahweh's distance from land, he "does not see," *ʾên rōʾeh* and he has "abandoned" *ʿzb* the land (8:12).

Next he sees lamenting women. The text states they are *mĕbakkôt ʾet-hattammûz*, "weeping the Tammuz." (8:12–14). One could suppose, given the previous statement by the elders in Ezek 8:12, that these women were lamenting and expressing grief because Yahweh distanced himself from the land. As such, they are expressing their grief over Yahweh's departure by adapting a *Tammuz* ritual, a special genre of lament known from Mesopotamian religion.[569] In Sumerian mythology Tammuz was a deity who died

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[566] Ibid.

[567] Exod 25:8; Lev 26:11–12; Deut 12:1–11; 1 Kgs 8:14–21.

[568] In her recent commentary, M. Odell maintains that the abominations listed in this chapter should be understood as four phases in a Yahwistic ritual of complaint rather than a separate list of Judah's idolatries, as is commonly understood by scholars. As such, the ritual was an attempt at imploring Yahweh to return to his earthly shrine because his estrangement brought disaster in the land. She offers two pieces of evidence for this non-traditional interpretation. First, she argues that one can trace aspects of genuine Yahwistic devotion throughout the various scenes. Second, she highlights that the nature of the judgment announced in 8:17–18 as a consequence concerns condemnation of Judah's prayers, not its idolatry (Odell, *Ezekiel*, 104).

[569] I owe this interpretation to Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 294–295. His translation and interpretation of *mĕbakkôt ʾet-hattammûz* "weeping *the* Tammuz" contrasts the traditional translation and interpretation by commentators who translate the phrase as "weeping *for* Tammuz" and interpret the women's actions as venerating the dying and rising deity Tammuz. For details on the ritual, see S. Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1969). Note especially T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); 50–56. Idem., "Toward the Image of Tammuz," in *Toward the Image of Tammuz and Other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture* (ed. W. L. Moran; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 73–103; E. M. Yamauchi, "Tammuz and the Bible," *JBL* 84 (1965): 283–290.

and departed to the netherworld. His departure resulted in chaos for the land and people of Sumer. It is possible that these women are not engaged in the Tammuz cult but have equated Yahweh with Tammuz.[570] The traditional interpretation is equally possible which states that a syncretism which involved cultic devotion specifically for Tammuz was taking place in Yahweh's temple; hence, the women were weeping because he (Tammuz) was gone, too. Although the precise nature of this abomination is open to interpretation, the description of these women provides evidence that 6th century B.C. Judah was aware of Mesopotamian lament traditions that incorporated the weeping goddess motif.[571] Finally, Ezekiel sees sun worshippers (8:16).[572] Upon seeing this third group of idolaters, God tells Ezekiel that he has hardened himself against them; he will not have pity. His anger is such that he will not be moved to pity.[573] Likewise, even if they shout loudly in his ears (as in a loud lament)[574] he will not listen

[570] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 294–295.

[571] This is the point raised by Bouzard, *Sources*, 129.

[572] For this practice see, J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, 84–87. Consult also, M. Smith, *The Early History of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 115–124.

[573] BHS apparatus notes that Ezek 8:18 represents one of the *Tiqqune sopherim.* It appears that the scribes objected to the expression "my nose" (*ʾpy*) referring to God and corrected it with *ʾpm*, "their nose." Yahweh will not tolerate Judah's abominations. As Yahweh shows Ezekiel all the abominations, stage by stage, a growing tension builds in the vision. The verse serves as Yahweh's climactic and decisive response to that tension.

[574] Ezekiel adds the qualifying phrase "loud" or "great voice" (*qôl gādôl*) to the crying/calling out (*qrʾ*) that gives a particular nuance to the statement. In 2 Sam 19:5–6, a clear mourning context, David mourns Absalom's death. The text says he cries (*zʿq*) with a loud voice (*qôl gādôl*) as a result. See also Ezek 11:13 below where Ezekiel cries out (*zʿq*) in a "loud voice" (*qôl gādôl*) to Yahweh in supplication and mourning. A case could be made for the interchangeability of the two verbs. Jer 11:11 is a case in point. Even though (*qôl gādôl*) is not used, it has a similar context with Ezek 8:18. God says to Jeremiah that though they cry (*zʿq*) to him, he will not listen. Zech 7:13 also informs the discussion. Zech 7:1–4 reports an inquiry from the people of Bethel to the leadership concerning the appropriateness of continuing their mourning and fasting in the fifth month as was done in exile. Yahweh uses their question as an opportunity to expose the hypocrisy and wickedness of their hearts (Zech 7:5–12). Their fasts were not for Yahweh, and neither did they execute just judgments one to another. Although he repeatedly called to them (via the prophets) to change their ways, they would not hear him. His silence provoked them to call out (*qrʾ*) to him but it was too late, he would not listen, hence, the exile. Both Zech 7:13 and Ezek 8:18 use *qrʾ*. Both texts reflect the voice of the people. Likewise, Yahweh turns a deaf ear in both examples. Unlike Ezek 8:18, Zech 7:13 does have *qôl gādôl*. The point seems clear. Mournful petitions and desperate cries for deliverance and help are in view with these texts and Ezek 8:18 is no exception. Therefore, it is possible, given the context of Ezek 8, that this is reminiscent of the loud weeping and wailing often associated with lament rituals. As a way to counteract the misery brought on by the deity's wrath and subsequent departure, women especially wailed and lamented. In so doing they were trying to coerce the deity to reverse the chaos and calamity. It was an attempt to petition the deity in order to have things return to normal. Ezek 9:4 seems to support this idea. The man clothed in linen is asked to preserve only those

(8:18).[575] Instead, in what follows, Yahweh shouts in Ezekiel's ears in order to summon the executioners for their task. Thus, Ezek 8:5–18, in particular, serves as an explanation for Israel's distance from Yahweh, as well as a justification to Ezekiel why Yahweh has to leave. The *tôʿēbôt* "abominations" of the house of Judah and the violence in the land have provoked Yahweh to anger and aroused his jealousy (8:3, 5, 17). As the vision makes obvious, Yahweh's actions are not whimsical. They are clear, decisive, and calculated. Fault lies with his people. Israel's deity has a rationale for abandoning his city, people, and temple.[576] Now that a rationale has been given for Yahweh's anger (Ezek 8:4–18), in what follows Yahweh communicates how he intends to deal decisively with their abominations.

Ezekiel 9–11: The Temple Owner's Response–Divine Abandonment

Ezekiel 9

In chapter 9 the "glory" *kābôd* now shouts in Ezekiel's ears, summoning the executioners. He gives instructions to the man clothed in linen, and then to the executioners to kill in the sanctuary and the city (Ezek 9:5–7). Now it is Yahweh who defiles his own temple with abominations. He then explains about the land and the city and quotes the citizens as saying the same thing that the elders said, namely, that God abandoned the city (9:9) and gets a report from the man that, indeed, the executions have taken place (Ezek 9:9–11).[577] Yahweh has been decisive. As Yahweh reports events to Ezekiel throughout the vision, he also interprets some of those events for him.

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in Jerusalem who are moaning and groaning over the abominations (lamenting) *hāʾănāšîm hanneʾĕnāḥîm wĕhanneʾĕnāqîm*. From the report to Ezekiel following the executions, it does not appear, however, that he found any mourners. If there is an allusion to the idea of mourning behind the phrase in Ezek 8:18, Yahweh makes clear that his response will not be favorable.

[575] Besides cultic abominations such as the worship of images, animals, Tammuz, and the sun (8:10, 13, 15, 17), they engage in social crimes full of violence and injustices (9:9; 11:15), have poor leadership (8:11–12; 11:2), and are breaking Yahweh's laws but keeping the laws of surrounding nations (11:12). One could say that Israel has wrought spiritual damage to Yahweh's house in the same way an enemy would do physical damage to an architectural structure. In fact, Yahweh walks Ezekiel through the temple precincts to see the extent of its "destruction" as one would an eye witness to a demolition. The latter point is an example of the *poetic technique* of reversal used by Ezekiel. See chapter five and descriptions of destruction on the temple for more of a discussion.

[576] Consequently, the book does not express sorrow in the same way as the laments. There is not one formal lament for Jerusalem in the book of Ezekiel. Instead, sordid details about the consequences are highlighted. In many ways, Ezekiel is a lament that nobody laments (excluding the prophet). In the Mesopotamian material divine whim provides the rationale for the deity's departure. No fault can be found with the people which, in turn, leads to a dramatic expression of sorrow.

[577] There is an aside on the remnant which deals with the corollary theme of human alienation (9:8), a theme which is addressed in chapter 11.

Such is the case with the abominations conducted by the elders and citizens. Yahweh indicates to Ezekiel that the rationale behind the abominations of the elders and the city's citizens concerns divine abandonment. Both groups are thinking and perceiving that Yahweh "does not see" *ʾên rōʾeh* and that he has already abandoned (*ʿzb*) the land (8:11–13; 9:9). However, at the outset of the vision, Yahweh made two things clear to Ezekiel. First, Yahweh is still in the temple via his *kābôd*. Second, the people have distanced themselves (*lĕroḥŏqâ mēʿal miqdāšî*) from Yahweh and his temple (8:6). A tension is set up within the vision concerning abandonment. Is it the people who have abandoned Yahweh on account of their abominations, thus, providing him with a rationale for leaving? Or has Yahweh abandoned his people on account of his callousness, thus, providing the people with a rationale for their abominations? The resolution of the tension comes in the last two chapters of the visionary account.

Ezekiel 10–11: The Nature of Yahweh's Departure

As the story of abandonment continues, chapter 10 is especially important. Here Ezekiel depicts Yahweh in avian-like imagery slowly and reluctantly leaving his earthly shrine. In so doing it shows Yahweh's freedom of movement and eventual departure from his earthly dwelling (Ezek 10:18–19).[578] The avian imagery is achieved in the vision by describing the movement of the *kābôd*, with or without the cherubim, as well as describing the movement of the cherubim.

The movement of the *kābôd* is acknowledged with various verbs of motion such as *ʿālâ* (Ezek 9:3) and *rûm* (Ezek 10:4, 16), "to go up" or "to rise" as well as *yāṣāʾ* (Ezek 10:18) and *ʿāmad* (Ezek 10:18; 11:23) "to go forth" or "to stand." Within the temple precincts the *kābôd* can and does move independently from the cherubim and is not confined by them (Ezek 9:3; 10:3–4). This is also true when the *kābôd* actually appears to be leaving the city as it goes to the mountain (Ezek 11:23). The *kābôd* departs, so it seems, leaving the cherubim behind since there is no further mention of their assistance in Ezek 11:23.

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[578] Rather than complicate the story of abandonment that unfolds in the vision, chapter 10 actually complements it by setting the scene for God abandoning the city. Ezek 10:2 with the command to burn the city is linked to Ezek 9:11 and the man clothed in linen. It is also connected to Ezek 10:4–7 with the glory and cherubim on account of the fire coming from the burning coals between the cherubim. The cherubim who hand over the fire to the man clothed in linen provide a transition in the story line (10:7). After this important notification in Ezek 10:7, Ezek 10:8 commences by mentioning the cherub's hands. This sets into motion a detailed description of the cherubim and their vehicle (10:8–17). It then dawns on Ezekiel that the cherubim he describes and now sees in Yahweh's temple (10:15, 20–22) were the living creatures he saw at the river Chebar (1:5–14). He relates the whole section to chapters 1–3, associates glory with cloud, and with being enthroned above the cherubim.

However, when the *kābôd* actually leaves the temple as discussed in Ezek 10:18–19, it does so with the assistance of the cherubim. The *kābôd* was last seen in 10:4 on its own without the cherubim at the threshold of the house. This provides the setting for Ezek 10:18b where the *kābôd* is joined again with the cherubim. The following breakdown illustrates how chapter 10 intends us to understand that the movement of the *kābôd* is in conjunction with the service of the cherubim in this particular instance:

10:18b *kĕbod yhwh* over cherubim
10:19a cherubim lift wings and mount
10:19b cherubim arrive at east gate of house
10:19c *kĕbod ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl* over cherubim

The position of the *kābôd* is described in relationship to the cherubim as *ʿălêhem milmāʿĕlâ* literally "over them," "upwards" when the cherubim stood/paused (*ʿāmad*) at the entrance of the east gate (Ezek 10:19). This adverb of location *milmāʿĕlâ* is doubtless a stagnant position.[579] Rather, the placement of the *kābôd* over the cherubim might best be a position that implies a hovering motion. Thus, in 10:19 when the cherubim are standing at the east gate of Yahweh's temple, the following translation "the glory of the God of Israel *hovering over them*" (*kĕbôd ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl ʿălêhem milmāʿĕlâ*) seems appropriate. Likewise, in preparation for the removal of the *kābôd* from the city, it is again positioned "over them," "upwards" with respect to the raised wings of the cherubim (Ezek 11:22).[580] Furthermore, it seems that the placement of the *kābôd* "over the cherubim" functions as an inclusio in these verses. The impression one has is of a simultaneous movement between the *kābôd* and cherubim. The *kābôd* does not move out of the temple without the assistance of the cherubim.[581] Therefore, the verbs of motion, especially *rûm*, meaning "to rise," together with the possible "hovering" movement of the *kābôd* create a distinct picture of Yahweh in the vision. It seems to depict Yahweh in avian fashion. This avian imagery of Yahweh's movement is further enhanced when one considers the movement of the cherubim and the nature of their assistance to the *kābôd*.

Throughout the vision the cherubim are either "standing," *ʿmd* (Ezek 10:3), "mounting" or "lifting up" their wings, *rûm* or *nāsāʾ* (10:15–16, 19; 11:22). Although it appears that both their wheels and wings provide the

[579] This same expression *milmāʿĕlâ* is also used of water in Josh 3:13, 16 lending support to the idea here.
[580] So, too, Block's translation (*Ezekiel 1–24*, 326).
[581] Here in Ezekiel the cherubim's role is specific: to move Yahweh out of his dwelling. For other texts where the movement of God is the primary function of the cherubim, see Ps 104:3; 1 Chr 28:18; Ps 18:10. In general the role of the cherubim is primarily to guard holy things (Gen 3:24; Exod 36:35; 1 Kgs 6:23–29; Exod 25:18–22; 37:7–9; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2 and Isa 37:16).

cherubim with motion, their main movement, it could be argued, comes not from the wheels but from their wings (Ezek 10:5, 16, 19; 11:22; 1:19, 24). The following reasons provide a rationale. First, the wings are emphasized in the vision. This is noticeable because the cherubim are lifting up their wings repeatedly in the vision.[582] Attention is drawn to the flying movement of the cherubim, the means by which the *kābôd* is removed from the temple (Ezek 10:18–19). Tied to their flying movement is the noise generated by their flapping wings (Ezek 10:5; 1:24). With respect to the noisy commotion they cause, Ezek 10:5 mentions that the noise of their wings when in motion was such that it could be heard at the furthest edge of the temple complex (Ezek 10:5). One could interpret this constant motion as indicative of a readiness (Ezek 1:24) or restlessness in anticipation of the departure (10:5). Thus, this vision appears to emphasize the wings of the cherubim on account of their flying movement and the noisy commotion they cause when in motion.

The second reason why the wings seem to provide the cherubim with their main source of motion concerns the de-emphasis of the wheels in the vision. It is clear that the wheels keep pace with the creatures and that their movements are synchronized with the creatures (Ezek 10:16). This harmony is achieved between the wheels and living creatures by the fact *kî rûaḥ haḥayyâ bā'ôpannîm* "for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels" (cf. 1:20–21; 10:17). Furthermore, the wheels are de-emphasized (they did not turn) with respect to any kind of directional change they might otherwise have provided (10:16; 1:19).

Thus, when putting all the elements together concerning the "hovering" *kābôd* and the flying cherubim, Yahweh's avian-like departure comes to the foreground in the vision. Yahweh is being depicted in the form of a bird and flying away from his temple, much like the Mesopotamian deities in the city laments.[583] Furthermore, the pace of the *kābôd* of Yahweh as it departs the temple is noteworthy, especially as it is compared to the laments. Yes, he has to leave the premises due to the current abominations. However, he will go at his determined pace. Ezekiel witnesses what ap-

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[582] Ezek 10:16, 19; 11:22.

[583] Indirect support for this idea might be found in Hos 9:11. The verse speaks of Ephraim's *kābôd* flying away (*ʿôp*) like a bird. To be sure, *kābôd* in this text means power, and its referent is Ephraim, not Yahweh as in Ezek 8–11. However, the fact that this verse depicts the *kābôd* of Ephraim with the verb "to fly" lends some support to the avian imagery of Yahweh in Ezek 8–11 even though *ʿôp*, a verb typically used for the flying motion is never used in the vision. Another insightful text is the midrash of R. Johanan from the 3rd century A.D. which expresses the departure of Yahweh in the following manner: "For three and a half years the Presence [*hâššěkina*] tarried on the Mount of Olives, proclaiming thrice daily, 'Return, wayward sons' (Jer 3:22). When it saw they would not repent, *it flew away*, saying, 'I will go back to my [heavenly] abode till they realize their guilt; in their distress they will seek me and beg for my favor'" [Hos 5:15] (*Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* 13:11) cited here from Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 191.

pears to be Yahweh's slow and even reluctant departure at several stages in the vision. One gets this impression on account of the staged movement of the *kābôd* out of the temple. In the vision the *kābôd* moves or "flies" from the Ark of the Covenant, to the temple's entrance, to the east gate, and eventually to the mountain in the east (Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 19; 11:22–23). The initial step is Yahweh's removal of himself from the Holy of Holies, the place of his earthly throne, to the temple's entrance (Ezek 9:3). After the destruction of the guilty, Yahweh joins up again with the waiting cherubim at the temple's entrance, then moves out of the temple to the east gate of the temple complex and temporarily stops (10:4, 18–19). After the death of Pelatiah at the east gate, Yahweh takes the final step and departs the city heading east (11:23). The pace of Yahweh's departure is reminiscent of Ningal's reluctant retreat in UL where she initially refuses to leave but, then, due to the destruction, is forced out.[584] The calculated and orderly flight of the *kābôd* creates an atmosphere of suspense and uncertainty in the vision. Will Yahweh really leave?[585] By the end of the vision the uncertainty is settled. All this sets the scene for Yahweh's departure of the city in Ezek 11:23.

Finally, in chapter 11 the story of abandonment comes to a close. Even though the chapter seems to interrupt the staged departure of the glory, its purposes with respect to abandonment are still apparent. The question of alienation from the sanctuary is debated and central here. This is evidenced by the Jerusalem mindset towards their fellow exiles. Those in Jerusalem believed that the exiles were far from the Lord and had forfeited their rights to the land. The statement "they are distant from Yahweh" *rāḥaq mē'al* (11:15) uttered by those in Jerusalem expresses a physical alienation on account of the exile. The notion of human alienation has already been noted elsewhere in the vision (8:6; 8:12; 9:9). The debate reflects human departure from the sanctuary, a counterpoint that seems implicitly linked to God's departure. It communicates another aspect of Yahweh's presence and absence. However, "the estrangement is given a perverse twist – it is not God who is alienated but the exiles. They have been expelled from the land, which obviously must mean that they are also far away from Yahweh."[586] But the conflicting claims of the exiles and of those left in Jerusalem are resolved in favor of the exiles. God became a "little sanctuary"

[584] UL 143; 237–238. See also, Nanna in LSUr 370.
[585] That Yahweh would abandon his people was an incomprehensible idea when one considers the theological paradigm of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Jeremiah and his great temple sermon (chapter 7) illustrates their mindset as does Ps 46 reflecting Israel's unwavering confidence.
[586] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 347.

miqdāš mĕʿaṭ among the exiles (Ezek 11:16).[587] To an extent I agree with Block when he mentions that the text does not disclose how the exiled population might have experienced the divine presence.[588] However, given Ezekiel's *ben ʾādām* role, one need not wonder too much. After the debate is resolved, both God and Ezekiel leave the city. Jerusalem is abandoned by *kĕbôd yhwh* (Ezek 11:22–23).[589] Ezekiel is transported back to exile

[587] Alternatively, one could render *miqdāš mĕʿaṭ* with the understanding that Yahweh was "a sanctuary for a little while." Regardless, the statement is revealing because it shows he *was* a sanctuary, thus, not dwelling in one.

[588] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 350.

[589] The image of Yahweh's departure in Ezek 8–11 is dramatic, and due to the avian elements, corresponds to the city laments. There are, however, other images of abandonment that surface in the rest of the book that also are reminiscent of the laments. For example, through language Ezekiel uses an idiom that expresses Yahweh's abandonment of the nation quite forcefully. The idiom *nāṯan pānîm bĕ* and *śîm pānîm bĕ*, "to set the face," appears on three occasions (Ezek 14:8; 15:7a; Ezek 15:7b respectively). In each text, this verb/ preposition construction indicates Yahweh's hostility (as subject) towards the object, not unlike the use of the phrase elsewhere in the biblical corpus with Yahweh as the subject. In chapter 14 Yahweh is personally setting his face against the elders or anyone who separates from Yahweh by taking idols into their hearts (*nātattî pānay bāʾîš*). He vows to "cut off" (*hikrît*) as a result. In Ezek 15, Yahweh promises that he will set his face against the inhabitants of Jerusalem and destroy the vine by fire because of their faithlessness (vs. 7).

The references in these chapters contrasts the other times in the book where Yahweh commands the prophet, acting on his behalf, *śîm pānêkā ʾel* / *ʿal* / *derek,* "to set your face toward/against …" or "to fix" your face towards someone or something (Ezek 6:2; 13:17; 21:7 [Eng. 2]; 25:2; 28:21; 38:2; 29:2; 35:2; 21:2 [Eng. 20:46]). Of these nine, four refer to the action as it is directed towards Israel (6:2; 13:17; 21:7 [Eng. 2]; 21:2 [Eng. 20:46]. The other five references are directed toward the nations in the latter half of the book (25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2). In the latter texts, Ezekiel is the subject, and the verb is *śîm*, revealing the interchangeability of the expression relative to the subjects and verbs used.

What is important here is how this formulaic language can express divine abandonment, something particularly evident when Yahweh is the subject as in Ezek 14 and 15. "Setting the face against" (abandonment) is the opposite of "setting the face upon" or "turning towards" somebody or something favorably expressed by *ûpānîtî ʾălêkem* (Ezek 36:9; Lev 26:9). The former indicates divine abandonment, the latter divine presence, thus, confirming Layton's research regarding this idiom (See Scott Layton, "Biblical Hebrew 'To Set the Face,' in Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic," *UF* 17 [1986]: 169–181). Something similar happens elsewhere in the book. In Ezek 5:8, Yahweh declares, "I am against you, I myself!" The Hebrew phrase *hinnĕnî ʿālayik gam ʾănî* has a clear intent. It denotes divine abandonment or alienation. In fact, it seems to be expressing a contrasting formula with *hinnĕnî ʿimmāk* "I, I am with you," used elsewhere to speak of divine presence and assistance (Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 202). The reason Yahweh is withdrawing himself is outlined in the subsequent verses. Israel is guilty. She has not kept Yahweh's statutes or ordinances and has acted abominably (5:7, 9).

Layton ("To Set the Face," 169–181) has shown that the phrase was a common idiom in the ancient world. His study on the meaning of the phrase in the Hebrew Bible reflects both a literal sense (to turn the face physically, or to express movement towards a location) and an idiomatic one (ibid). With respect to Ezekiel, both meanings are attested (ibid. 180; Ezek 4:3, 7; 6:2; 14:8; 15:7; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2), contrary to Block who suggests that each time the phrase appears in Ezekiel it concerns Yahweh's psychological disposition

(11:24–25). Accordingly, this would explain why both Yahweh through his *kābôd* and Ezekiel as *ben ʾādām* show up in the opening vision in Babylon.

This point emphasizing Yahweh's avian-like departure, although obvious enough, is overlooked by scholars because of the traditional understanding of the wheeled cherubim in Ezekiel (1:10) as a "vehicle" bearing the *kābôd*. Scholars typically designate the mobile vehicle as the throne chariot of Yahweh. This is especially true in rabbinic traditions and interpretations of the presence in other biblical texts with similar imagery.[590]

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toward the object and not physical movement (Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 35). For the literal meaning, see Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 83–110; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 182–183. However, in Ezek 14 and 15 it seems that both the literal and idiomatic meanings could apply. It is Yahweh's hostile disposition towards the elders and inhabitants of the land that eventually lead him to abandon his people. By physically removing himself from their presence, he withdraws all support. Thus, it appears that a twofold meaning could be intended by Ezekiel's use of the term.

The idiom is noteworthy also because in NL, one finds a comparable Sumerian phrase with similar meaning. In NL, Enlil, the lord of the city, abandons Nippur; it states that "the lord of the city crushed heads … he set his face away to a hostile place, its lord having abandoned it" (NL 2:70–75). Enlil's gesture is, indeed, a physical one to be sure. Yet, the hostility involved in such a gesture seems obvious from the context of the lament. It seems possible, therefore, given the tone of the surrounding *kirugu* that the use of the idiom in Sumerian also served a dual purpose. In both the laments and Ezekiel, the use of this particular idiom reflects abandonment.

Noteworthy is Ezek 4:3 because the idiom currently under discussion appears with the prophet as subject. Ezekiel sets his face in hostility towards Jerusalem. This is a gesture that corresponds to Yahweh's eye not overlooking the abominations in the city in 5:11. On account of the things he does (4:1–5:4), Ezekiel's actions represent an *ʾôt*, "sign" or "portent," for the house of Israel (4:3). For a full discussion on the topic, see Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 27–31. See also, Odell, "You Are What You Eat," 229–248 and S. Blank, "The Prophet as Paradigm" in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics* (eds. J. Crenshaw and J. Willis; New York: KTAV, 1974), 113–130. Important to this study is how some of the prophet's actions communicate that he is taking the place of Yahweh, a point made by Friebel (*Sign-Acts*, 204). Friebel's proof for this is indicated in the interpretation of the prophet's actions by Yahweh in Ezek 5:5–11. For example, in Ezek 4:1 Jerusalem is set in front of Ezekiel. This corresponds to Yahweh setting Jerusalem in the midst of the nations in Ezek 5:5. Again, in Ezek 4:1 the model of Jerusalem that is open to public display corresponds to Jerusalem's public display of divine disfavor in 5:8. In 4:2 Ezekiel's manipulation of the siege works corresponds to God bringing judgment on the city in 5:8–9. As Friebel concludes, "in all these activities, the prophet was taking on the theological role of God" (Ibid., 204). Thus, as a sign, Ezekiel is a surrogate of God to the city and people. The people know what Yahweh is doing or will do, and how Yahweh feels. As Ezekiel takes the place of God in exile, the theme of divine abandonment takes center stage.

[590] R. Eliezer said that God sits upon His glorious throne with His hands outstretched beneath the wings of the living creature (*Pseudo–Seder Eliahu Zuta*, 37; cf. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 54). Block acknowledges that scenes of animals bearing deities in human form are typical to art in the ancient Near Eastern. But the wheels incorporate a dimension not seen before. He, therefore, designates it as a divine chariot (Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 106). Cooper says that the living vehicle with wheels represented the throne of God's glory, (*Ezekiel*, 68). Zimmerli comments how the living creatures in chapter 1 had the task of bearing Yahweh's throne but cautions that this is never said in explicit terms, only gathered

With Greenberg, however, it is appropriate to admit that the "ensemble is unique."[591] Although Ezekiel's vision utilizes traditional elements, he is not tied to a previously determined image with a calculated purpose. He exercises freedom when using traditional ideas.[592] It is, perhaps, possible that while chariot imagery is likely evident, an avian component is no less emphasized. The imagery in the laments seems to supports this interpretation. In sum, the evidence leading up to this proposal is fourfold. First, the *kābôd* is not static; it moves and is quite independent. Second, the vision emphasizes the wings of the cherubim. The wings provide motion and noise. The wings reflect the main manner in which the cherubim move. They are flying cherubim. Also, their flapping wings are emphasized. They create a noise in the temple in anticipation of their flight out of the sacred precinct. Third, the position of the *kābôd* over the cherubim (Ezek 10:19, 11:22) could be likened to a hovering action. Fourth, the wheels of Yahweh's throne chariot depend on the cherubim for their movement.[593]

SUMMARY

I have shown in this section on divine abandonment the narrative flow and framework for Ezek 8–11. Ezekiel relates the vision of 8:1–4 to 1:1–3 and 3:23 where God appears in amazing splendor in the likeness of a human

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from what follows (*Ezekiel 1*, 120). Substantial evidence exists from the biblical text in support of the traditional view. For example, one repeatedly finds the Israelite belief that Yahweh sat enthroned above/between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies (e.g., Exod 40:34–38; 1 Kgs 8:6–11; Ps 80:2; 99:1). Likewise, there are texts where the verb *rkb*, "to ride," is used in synonymous parallelism with the verb *ʿôp*, "to fly," so that the image of Yahweh is like a divine warrior, one who rides victoriously on cherubim as he sores through the sky (Ps 18:11; 2 Sam 22:11; Ps 104:3; 68:5; Deut 33:26; Isa 19:1). Beyond these texts, Yahweh is said to ride a chariot (Hab 3:8; Isa 66:15). Thus, it seems logical that in the subsequent retelling of the best of Israel's history, the Chronicler compiled all these images and interpreted the throne furnished with wheels (the cherub statues in Solomon's temple) as a "golden chariot" (1 Chr 28:28). Later Jewish traditions adopted what came to be known as *merkābâ* mysticism associated with the wheels and creatures in Ezek 1 and 10, a mysticism that understood the wheels to be transformed into a special class of angels.

Furthermore, there is ample evidence in the ancient Near East for mobile thrones, especially enthroned deities riding on animals or mythical beings who travel in the skies. Perhaps the most obvious is the enthroned goddess who is borne by a lion (*ANEP*, 537) or the disk wheeled divine chariot with a god standing in it (*ANEP*, 689). Block notes that "Ezekiel's chariot recalls images from the ancient Near East on seals where a storm god is depicted either on a four wheeled chariot or a two wheeled vehicle" (*Ezekiel 1–24*, 105). Yahweh's throne chariot is often compared to images of Baal, the rider of the sky, who like Yahweh, rides through the sky on his chariot or clouds in Ugarit (*CTA* 4.4.8; 19.1.43–44). In none of these cases, however, is the god avian unless it is solar.

[591] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 54.

[592] Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 56.

[593] One might ponder the necessity of flapping cherubim wings when the glory itself flies? Perhaps it is to accompany the glory bird.

person. He connects *kĕbôd ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl* (Ezek 8:4) with the *kĕbôd yhwh* (Ezek 3:23), and with the human figure in Ezek 1:28. In so doing he tells us that the glory is a man. In Ezek 8:1–4 the vision establishes his presence in the temple. Indeed, the vision reports something significant about the divine presence. This is Israel's God who abandons Jerusalem and settles on a mountain east of the city (Ezek 11:23–25). The rationale for abandonment is Yahweh's anger, something closely tied to Israel's abominations (Ezek 8).

I have drawn attention to the presence of avian imagery that suggests a possible connection with a common feature in the Mesopotamian city laments. The portrayal of Yahweh in Ezekiel's vision might be described as Yahweh's glory-bird. Here then, the Mesopotamian sources arguably help us to interpret Yahweh's departure with more precision.

Assignment of responsibility and *divine abandonment* represent two more of the nine city lament features. The appearance of these features in Ezekiel (the differences notwithstanding) suggests reflexes of city lament features in the book. With this in mind, the subsequent chapter will examine the possibility of two more reflexes of the city lament in Ezekiel, namely, *divine agents of destruction* and *destruction*.

CHAPTER FIVE: UNDERSTANDING SIN AND JUDGMENT IN EZEKIEL IN LIGHT OF TWO FEATURES OF THE MCL

INTRODUCTION

Now that Yahweh has abandoned Jerusalem he authorizes his agents of destruction to unleash his full fury on Jerusalem. Yahweh is chief antagonist in Ezekiel. Several succinct statements made by Ezekiel and Yahweh throughout the book testify to this. With respect to the prophet's opinion, Ezekiel personalizes the destruction of the city by stating that Yahweh was the agent of destruction. When the glory of the God of Israel returns to the newly built temple, Ezekiel comments on its semblance to two previous visions and encounters; one when "he (Yahweh) came to destroy the city"[594] and one back at the river Chebar (43:3).[595] The text represents a retrospective statement made by Ezekiel concerning Jerusalem's fall, fourteen years prior (40:1).[596] Yahweh was the enemy. He himself came to destroy the city. Furthermore, Yahweh admits he destroyed his own sanctuary (24:21; 43:1–6). Yahweh also acknowledges that *he* destroyed them in his anger due to their detestable practices (43:8). Thus, Yahweh willfully withdrew from the temple and proceeded to abandon Jerusalem (10:23). He was not forced out but left willingly. In other words, no foreign enemy or power had sovereignty over Yahweh. He destroyed Jerusalem and desecrated his own earthly temple. As a result, the book shows that Yahweh himself comes in a storm; a point to which I shall return.

Although Yahweh is his own agent of destruction, he has several agents at his disposal. Primarily, he invokes the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem. The terrible destruction mentioned in Ezekiel is issued and accomplished through Yahweh and his appointed agents. Again, this is reminiscent of Enlil in the laments. As chief antagonist he possesses several agents of destruction. Primarily, he invokes the evil storm and invading army. The terrible destruction described in the laments is, therefore, issued and accomplished through such agents. This chapter considers Yahweh's agents of destruction, particularly the most salient ones, and highlights the destruction described in Ezekiel for comparison with the laments.

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[594] The reading here departs from MT which has "when I came to destroy," and follows the reading supported by a few Hebrew mss., Theodotion, and the Vulgate. Ezekiel had no involvement in Jerusalem's destruction; hence, *bĕbōʾî* may likely be erroneous for *bĕbōʾô*.

[595] Presumably his departure from Jerusalem brought destruction (9:8; 11:22–23), and his appearance at the river Chebar represents proof (1:3, 28).

[596] Even though Ezekiel articulates this fourteen years after the city is destroyed, he was well aware at the time that Yahweh was the agent of destruction, as indicated in Ezek 9:8.

YAHWEH'S AGENTS OF DESTRUCTION

Agent #1: Yahweh's Storm

Ezekiel 1

Broadly speaking, the picture that unfolds in the larger section of Ezek 1–3 is as follows. The prophet has a vision. Ezekiel sees a storm wind approaching from the north, along with an enormous cloud, and fire flashing (Ezek 1:4). Once Ezekiel gets a closer glimpse of the cloud, he sees a likeness of a human form seated on a throne. The vision eventually reveals it is Yahweh (1:28). In fact, Ezekiel hears his voice (1:25, 28) and then the content of Yahweh's words follows in Ezek 2:1–11 along with the written scroll containing words of lamentation, mourning and a woe. Ezekiel is then taken into exile to speak and act on Yahweh's behalf. Thus, Yahweh appears to Ezekiel in a thunderstorm when he is alone by the river Chebar.[597]

A closer look at the combination of lexical features found in Ezek 1:4 reveal that this visitation of Yahweh appears not to be benign but rather a portent of disaster. There are three textual indications pointing to the unpleasant nature of the visitation; first, the meaning of *rûaḥ sĕʿārâ* and especially its use with *ʿānān gādôl*; second, the northern direction of the cloud; third, the nature of Yahweh's spoken word emanating from within the cloud.

rûaḥ sĕʿārâ

The first lexical component in Ezek 1:4 that helps determine the nature of Yahweh's visitation concerns *rûaḥ sĕʿārâ*. Literally the term means "a wind of a storm" or taken as an appositive, a wind, namely, a stormwind or windstorm.[598] But *rûaḥ sĕʿārâ* also appears with *ʿānān gādôl* "immense cloud" in Ezek 1:4. Cooper is right to note that "it is immense with respect to size but also intensity."[599] The intensity is indicated by the furious activity "in the midst of it," in the eye of the storm "fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze …." The eye of the storm produced bursts of lightning darting back and forth making the entire storm cloud appear bright as metal (1:4). When other storm or tempest terminology is used in conjunction with *ʿānān*, the meaning typically

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[597] Storms and clouds are associated with the divine presence elsewhere in the Bible (Job 38:1; 40:6; Ps 29:3–5; 104:3; 1Kgs 19:11–13).
[598] Joüon-Muraoka, *Grammar*, 131b, 478. It is also found in the plural *rûaḥ sĕʿārôt* in Ezek 13:11, 13, a text that will be examined below separately.
[599] Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 64.

suggests a destructive storm cloud, a metaphor for enemy invasion.[600] Perhaps *rûaḥ sĕʿārâ* used in conjunction with *ʿānān* here in Ezek 1:4 describes Yahweh's coming as a destructive enemy.[601] Indeed, it does not appear to be an ordinary storm cloud. This may further be substantiated by the northern direction from which appears this immense storm cloud.

ṣāpôn

ṣāpôn in Ezekiel can indicate physical geography as in the case of the temple measurements or the location where the sword will bring damage.[602] It also concerns the direction from which something/one emerges. For example, in Ezekiel the north houses a host of evil invaders (Ezek 23:23–24), namely, Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king (Ezek 26:7), the hordes of Gog (Ezek 38:6, 15; 39:2), and princes who were taken captive in the pit (Ezek 32:30). All these come from the north to do battle. These examples in Ezekiel demonstrate that nothing positive comes out of the north. This is not unlike the use of *ṣāpôn* in other prophetic literature, especially Jeremiah. The "north" in Jeremiah houses flood water, smoke, a boiling pot or a storm cloud, all of which bring great destruction.[603] It represents a place of captivity, evil and great destruction. Thus the north in Ezekiel, when not referring to physical geography, appears to be a metonymy for the enemy in many cases.

Although the mention of the "north" in Ezek 1:4 might just refer to Yahweh's abode, it could point to more, especially alongside *rûaḥ sĕʿārâ* and *ʿānān gādôl*.[604] If we understand that Ezekiel sees Yahweh as the one seated on the throne, the northerly direction from which he comes associates him with the evil invaders who typically come from the north mentioned in Ezekiel and other prophetic texts. It seems Yahweh is deliberately portrayed as the enemy in Ezekiel's opening vision. The storm of Yahweh's presence advances from the north like an enemy, clearly a bad indicator. This storm, together with Ezekiel's description of the approaching cloud as "great" or "enormous," a description unique to Ezekiel, shows this is no ordinary cloud coverage rolling in. There is, however, one more

[600] For a discussion on Ezek 13:11, 13, see below. Also, Jer 4:12–13 is a good example. In this text *sûpâ* "wind" (destructive in storm) is paired with *ʿānān* and describes an enemy coming upon Jerusalem.

[601] In the prophets *sĕʿārâ* is often used metaphorically for the stormy presence of God coming to destroy either Israel or her foes. This storm is always associated with God's presence or his voice (Isa 29:6; Jer 23:19; 30:23; Zech 9:14).

[602] Ezek 40:19–20; 21:3 [Eng. 4].

[603] See Jer 1:13–15; 4:6, 12–13; 6:1, 22; 10:22. Even the mention of Cyrus in Isa 41:25 as one coming from the north, while a positive event for captive Israel, speaks of him as one trampling on rulers, an invader essentially.

[604] The "north" is symbolically considered God's abode in Ps 48:2 and Isa 14:13.

lexical feature that supports the notion that Yahweh's visitation portents disaster.

qôl

The unfavourable nature of Yahweh's coming is further implied when one considers the sound or voice that emerges from the storm (1:25). From within the storm Ezekiel hears a theophanic voice (1:25, 28) a "thunderous voice" above the firmament, one that accompanied the flapping of the creatures' wings in 1:24.[605] At this time, however, no speech is attached to the voice. It is not until 1:28–3:11 that Ezekiel actually reports that the voice was a speaking voice, "I heard a voice speaking and he said to me …."[606] Ezekiel then reports the speech (2:1–11). Indeed, Yahweh's subsequent speech to Ezekiel is not positive, something evidenced by Ezekiel's response to the experience. As the spirit transports him to the exiles he goes back in bitterness and anger (3:14–15).

This *qôl* of the one speaking and its association with meteorological phenomena and the tempestuous power of the thunder storm in Ezek 1 do find a close analogy with the specific associations of Enlil's word or voice in the laments. Enlil's voice brings the effects of the violent storm in some *balags*, "It touches the earth like a storm … his word touches the earth like a storm. Its meaning is unfathomable. The word of great An touches the earth like a storm. Its meaning is unfathomable. The word of Enlil touches the earth like a storm. Its meaning is unfathomable." (*balag* 5:1–4)[607]

In sum, the lexical features discussed above, *sĕʿārâ* used with *ʿānān*, the northern direction of Yahweh's appearance and the theophanic voice within reflect portents of disaster.[608] This storm is life-like. It takes on a life of its

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[605] Jeffery J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai* (SOTBT 1; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 259–261 suggests that on account of the phraseology throughout the passage, the voice is not neutral but a thunderous voice, one that spells disaster. His evidence from Ezek 1 is as follows. First, Ezekiel hears a "sound of a great storm" or a noisy uproar. The only other occurrence of this particular phrase is in Jer 11:16 where Jeremiah characterizes Yahweh's judgment on Judah as "a roar of a great tempest." Second, the combination of *qôl* with "many waters" recollects Ps 29:3, 10 where Yahweh is depicted as enthroned above the judgment waters of the flood. Third, the sound of the creatures' wings is like that of an army camp.

[606] Ezek 1:28–2:1.

[607] Additionally, Enlil's name is capable of producing theophanic disruptions of nature, "When your name rests over the mountains, the sky itself trembles; the sky itself trembles, the earth itself shivers" (Kutscher, *Oh Angry Sea*, 145–146). See also, chapter one.

[608] Thus, in the absence of formal announcements of disaster (something prominent later on in the book), these lexical components supply an ominous tone. See also an important point raised by Uehlinger and Müller Trufaut who state about Ezek 1, "On the background of what we know on ominous correlations of astral and meteorological phenomena in Babylonian divination, this compound could almost certainly be interpreted in terms of a precise ominous significance by a 6th century scholar living in Babylonia" ("Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography," 163).

own on account of the speaking, human-like image at its center. The picture that unfolds in Ezek 1 is this: Yahweh is present in the storm but he is also the storm. The storm is the enemy and, shockingly, the enemy is Yahweh. Thus Yahweh, depicted as a storm god in Ezek 1, is his own agent of destruction.[609] Ezekiel specifically connects Yahweh to a storm and his voice/word with storm imagery in the opening of the book. But there is another text in Ezekiel that associates Yahweh with storm imagery.

Ezekiel 13:11, 13

In Ezek 13:1–16 Yahweh accuses the false prophets of wrongdoing and then proceeds to announce their sentencing. The material in 13:11–16 is especially revealing relative to Yahweh and storm imagery. In this passage Yahweh is depicted again as the primary agent of destruction who invokes a stormy wind to break out (piel of *bqʿ*) on the false prophets of Israel (13:11,13) because they deceived rather than helped his people (13:10). That the storm is devastating is indicated by its description: *gešem šôṭēp* "deluging rain," *ʾabnê ʾelgābîš* "pounding hailstones," and *rûaḥ sĕʿārôt* "stormy winds."[610] This is not, however, a typical meteorological happening because these verses also personalize the tempest. As Block puts it; "The hurricane winds, the driving rain, and the pounding hail are impelled by the exploding fury of Yahweh, who is determined to destroy the house."[611] This *rûaḥ sĕʿārôt* is used metaphorically for the stormy presence of God coming in his wrath on the false prophets.[612]

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[609] While it is true that one of the arguments of Ezekiel is that God is no longer tied to Jerusalem or the temple but is the God of the Diaspora, Yahweh's appearance to Ezekiel in a foreign land has more ominous overtones than is generally observed. Most understand the glory as positive for Ezekiel and the exiles. As his reaction shows at the end of the encounter with Yahweh, Ezekiel is bitter and angry, not overjoyed that Yahweh shows up in a pagan land. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the glory of Yahweh remains among the exiles. Ezekiel and the glory of Yahweh are eventually separated (3:12–15). In Ezekiel 3:22, Yahweh wants to rendezvous once again with the prophet. This time, however, Yahweh calls Ezekiel away from his present location (possibly his house) to the valley for the meeting. It seems there is a deliberate attempt to keep the encounters between Ezekiel and Yahweh private for the moment. Perhaps, this is how we are to understand Yahweh's statement in Ezek 11:16 given this latter consideration. Yahweh, through the glory of his presence, might have been "a sanctuary for a little while" or a "little sanctuary" to the exiles in Babylon on account of the encounters with Ezekiel. However, it should be kept in mind that the statement in 11:16 refers to all those who have been scattered to various countries, not just the exiles in Babylon. What Yahweh meant by this statement is difficult to determine.

[610] Block calls these irrupting hurricane force winds (*Ezekiel 1–24*, 408).

[611] Ibid., 408.

[612] Other tempest terminologies such as *sûpā* or *šōʾâ* which speak of a heavy, destructive wind-rain storm or gale have the same metaphorical meaning. At times Yahweh's tempest and storm wind is directed at Israel's enemies (Amos 1:14, Nah 1:3). At other times, God breaks forth in storm like fury on his own people (Isa 10:3; 29:6; Jer 4:12–13).

The metaphorical use of the storm and storm language in Ezek 13 and Ezek 1 corresponds to the laments where the storm of Enlil takes on a life of its own. Bouzard notes that, "As an expression of divine anger, the storm is lethal; it generates flood, fire, famine, homelessness, and above all, human death."[613] The word of Enlil in the *balags*, especially, becomes the storm itself. Thus Ezek 1:4 and 13:11, 13 are texts that illustrate the similarity of Yahweh's storm to that of Enlil's. Both are devastating agents of destruction, life-like, and serve as an apt metaphor for forces destroying the city. Indeed, Yahweh appears to be a storm god in the likeness of Enlil, "Lord Wind" or "god of (all) gods."[614]

Admittedly, it is not uncommon for deities in the ancient Near East to be depicted as storm gods. One could argue that the similar images of Yahweh in Ezekiel and Enlil in the laments are standard. However, when one considers Ezekiel's geographical context, the alternative explanation diminishes substantially. This is important for two reasons.

First, the river Chebar represents the home of Ezekiel and the exilic community.[615] Recent research by D. Frayne notes that Chebar should be linked to a canal stream running, not in the center, but in the east part of Nippur.[616] Frayne connects no Tel or mound to Chebar (there is none), but

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[613] Bouzard, *Sources*, 79.

[614] As ruler over the atmosphere he can generate destructive storms against his enemies. Enlil is also called "The Great Mountain" and "King of the Foreign Lands," which according to Black and Green, may connect him to the Zagros mountains; "Other images used to describe his personality are king, supreme lord, father and creator, 'raging storm' and 'wild bull', and interestingly, 'merchant'" (Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, "Enlil [Ellil]," *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 76). See also Piotr Steinkeller, "On Rulers, Priests and Sacred Marriage, Tracing the Evolution of Early Sumerian Kingship" in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East: Papers of the Second Colloquium on the Ancient Near East – The City and its Life* (ed. K. Watanabe; Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1999), 114. He argues against the traditional etymology of Enlil's name as "Lord Wind" or "Air-God" in favor of *il-ilī "god of (all) the gods." Also it has been noted by Dobbs-Allsopp, that Yahweh, in the book of Lamentations, fulfills many of the same roles associated with Enlil in the Mesopotamian laments (Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 60). However, the book of Ezekiel imports more Enlil imagery into that work than has been acknowledged by Dobbs-Allsopp. Although the laments highlight the destructive nature of the storm, the storm of Enlil could also be beneficial to humanity. This is implied in NL 96 and LU 175–176 where the poet shows how Enlil takes away the good storm and brings an evil one in its place. But the concept of a beneficial storm is explicit in a few Mesopotamian myths (Jacobsen, *Treasures*, 99).

[615] So too, Ezek 3:15, 23; 10:15, 22; 43:3.

[616] Personal conversation with D. Frayne. Commentators who examine Ezekiel's location by the River Chebar generally associate it with the Grand Canal or the *šaṭṭ en-nîl* that runs through the middle of Nippur (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 16, 112, 139), a location in the vicinity of Nippur. This is largely due to the fact that the five main districts/settlements in Nippur were situated on the banks of five large canals, the *šaṭṭ en-nîl* being one among the five. See R. Zadok, "The Nippur Region During the Late Assyrian, Chaldean and Achaemeniain Periods, Chiefly According to Written Sources," *IOS* 8 (1978): 266–332. However, Zadok, Frayne, and Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1–20*, 40) provide details that argue against this.

only a stream. He estimates the distance from Chebar to Nippur to be no more than one-half of a half kilometer. Significantly, this places Ezekiel and the exilic community not just in the vicinity of Nippur, but within a close suburb of Nippur, a city which for centuries was renowned as a hub of Mesopotamian religion. If Ezekiel's geographical proximity is very near Nippur, as the evidence suggests, he and his compatriots dwelt where Enlil, the "storm god" or "god of gods" resided and ruled. Ezekiel and the exiles are in a suburb of the ziggurat of Enlil, the residence or *Ekur* of Enlil.[617]

Although the disuse and revival of the *Ekur* and the ziggurat precedes Ezekiel, and under Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid rule Nippur seems to have once again declined in prominence, Nippur's religious structures would still have been visible to Ezekiel and the exiles. It is fathomable, based on the archaeological evidence, that Ezekiel could have seen the 70 foot ruins of the ancient ziggurat from his house.[618] This visual aide might explain the storm imagery of Yahweh used in the book. It might equally shed light on Yahweh's strong desire for name recognition within the exilic community. The emphasis on name recognition might even reflect a polemic towards Enlil, also designated as "god of gods."

The second reason Ezekiel's geographical context is important for the comparison is obvious. One of the five principal laments "derives" from the

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[617] Since ancient times the principal god of Nippur was Enlil. In Nippur both a temple and ziggurat were designated to him. In the Neo-Babylonian period Marduk reigned supreme. But this did not prevent the eminent role of other deities such as Enlil from being maintained in his traditional town of Nippur. In fact, the strength of local traditions in the first millennium testifies to the fact that, although Marduk's primacy was not being challenged in Babylon, his power was not absolute. This is an important consideration for Ezekiel. Thus Enlil, along with eleven other gods, Marduk included, was considered a principal Babylonian god in the seventh and sixth centuries. His main temple was the *Ekur* or 'Mountain House' in Nippur. See Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

The ziggurat and temple of Enlil studded Nippur, the most sacred Mesopotamian city. When these meticulously maintained religious structures fell into disuse, they were not substantially rebuilt or repaired until the Kassite period. Between the fall of the Kassite kingdom and the 8th century, Nippur was in decline. But under the Assyrian kings of the 8th century, notably Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, the city experienced revival. Both monarchs attended to the religious shrines. Esarhaddon repaired the *Ekur*. Ashurbanipal, however, focused on the neglected ziggurat and the *Ekur*. With respect to the former he encased the ziggurat in baked brick and, quite possibly, built a temple on top. See James Alan Armstrong, "The Archaeology of Nippur from the Deline of the Kassite Kingdom until the Rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1989), 193–241. According to Fisher's excavations at Nippur this ziggurat would have been approximately 26 meters high with debris (78 feet) or 22.3 meters high minus the water table (69 feet) at the time of Ashurbanipal's reign. And for the *Ekur* he repaved its courtyard a gesture not made in 600 years. The revival of these structures in the late Assyrian period is a testimony to the weight and ongoing influence of Enlil in Nippur, an influence not easily diminished by time. In fact, the buildings Ashurbanipal renovated survived until the Parthian period when a large fortress was built atop the *Ekur* complex.

[618] Thanks go to D. Frayne for this observation.

city of Nippur. As mentioned above, NL has more striking parallels with Ezekiel than the other four laments. Thus, it entirely reasonable and possible that Ezekiel's proximity to Nippur may have been the catalyst for importing Enlil imagery and lament features into his work. Thus, the comparisons between Yahweh and Enlil mentioned above can be understood and explained not only by the common theory of an overlapping of general features, but also (and perhaps preferably) by the presence of lament features that are attested within Ezekiel's specific geographical and religious setting in Babylon.

Agent #2: Enemy Invasion

Yahweh, like Enlil in the laments, also invokes the enemy. As in the laments, Ezekiel names the enemy; sometimes the enemy is nameless, and some of the enemies' activities are noted.[619] Perhaps Ezek 21 showcases these points the most.

Ezekiel 21:1–23

This chapter contains a rather vivid description of a sword. More specifically, it shows who owns, sharpens, and wields it, and the sword's deadly consequences. Unlike other mentions of the sword elsewhere in the book, the reader is told three times that the sword belongs to Yahweh.[620] There are three important items to observe about Yahweh's sword.

First, Yahweh unsheathes his own sword. The use of the hiphil stem of *yṣ'* and *krt* shows Yahweh's responsibility in unsheathing it, "I will draw forth (*yṣ'*) my sword out of its sheath and cut off (*krt*) from you both righteous and wicked."[621] Second, Yahweh prepares the sword for action. It needs to be carefully polished and sharpened.[622] The newly polished and sharpened sword seems to take on a life of its own just like Yahweh's storm.[623] Yahweh engages the sword directly in conversation with a series of imperatives in the causative stem.[624] Likewise, the sword's edge or face is designated by *pānayik* and not *pî*, as is customarily the case.[625] Finally, the sword is commanded to demonstrate its sharpness by the ease with

[619] In the laments, enemy invasion is another agency for Enlil to carry out the destruction. Enlil is responsible for sending the enemy upon Sumer. The laments usually name the enemies specifically and describe some of their activities. In the *balags* and *eršemmas*, however, the enemy is typically undesignated, but their activity is noted, especially as it concerns the plundering of the temple (Bouzard *Sources*, 81).
[620] Ezek 21:8–10 [Eng. 21:3, 4, 5] ("my sword" [*ḥarbî*]).
[621] Ezek 21:5, 8, 9, 10 [Eng. 21:3–5].
[622] Ezek 21:14–16 [Eng. 21:8–11].
[623] Ezek 21:19b–21 [Eng. 21:14b–16]. So, too, Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 660.
[624] Ezek 21:21 [Eng. 21:16].
[625] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 680.

which it moves from right to left.[626] Now that the personified sword is polished and given instructions for the great slaughter, it is time for the sword to be wielded. One might assume that Yahweh intends to wield the sword himself. However, the sword passes from Yahweh's hand to one of his agents of destruction.

Third, Yahweh authorizes the king of Babylon to wield the deity's sword. Yahweh promises that the sharpened and polished sword will be given into the hand of the slayer (21:11). The slayer is temporarily left unidentified. The passage moves from generalities to specifics as it identifies the invader. Ezek 21:15 asserts that it is Yahweh who gives (*ntn* in qal) the glittering sword to the unidentified slayer (21:16 [Eng. 21:11]). And then in Ezek 21:19 the text makes clear that the sword is now in the hands of the king of Babylon; "mark two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come …." Thus Yahweh authorizes the king of Babylon to wield the deity's sword. The passage reveals that Yahweh has handed over his sword to the king of Babylon.[627] The Babylonian king is another of Yahweh's agents, the one invoked by Yahweh to bring on the destruction. The destruction wrought by the enemy is only briefly noted, however. The king of Babylon comes to slaughter, to set battering rams against gates, to cast up mounds, and to build siege towers (21:22).

But upon whom will the sword fall? The text speaks of cutting off both the righteous and wicked; the sword is against all flesh.[628] It indiscriminately destroys. And in context this means the people remaining in the land of Israel (21:7 [Eng. 21:3]). Yahweh, via Nebuchadnezzar, is drawing the sword against his own people, "my people," (2x) and specifically against the princes of Israel (21:16 [Eng. 21:12]). The chapter describes the event and states that Yahweh has given "the sword for the great slaughter."[629]

Thus, the sword is, no doubt, a metonymy for battle. And finally, when the sword has performed its purposes, it is commanded (presumably by Yahweh) to return (hiphil impv of *šûb*) to its sheath, "return to the place where you were created, in the land of your origin" (21:35 [Eng. 30]). Here the sword serves as a metonymy for Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. The chapter has shown that the sword takes on a life of its own; it belongs to Yahweh who unsheathes it and authorizes it to be wielded. Indeed, Ezek 24 reports that the king of Babylon did in fact lay siege to Jerusalem. In this way Ezek 21:1–23 highlights enemy invasion most specifically in the

[626] Ezek 21:21 [Eng. 21:16].
[627] Ezek 21:24, 27 [Eng. 21:19, 22].
[628] Ezek 21:8 [Eng. 21:4].
[629] Ezek 21:15, 19, 20 [Eng. 21:10, 14, 15].

book.[630] Therefore, an enemy invasion invoked and controlled by Yahweh constitutes another of his agents of destruction.

Agent #1 and Agent #2 Merge: Storm and Enemy Invasion

At times in the laments storm and invasion imagery merge. LSUr describes a time when the Guti invade Sumer. The reason for the invasion, however, concerns the instigation of Enlil; "On that day Enlil brought the Guti out from the mountains," (LSUr 75–78). This "day of Enlil" with the coming of the Guti is described as the flood of Enlil that could not be withstood, a great storm of the plain (LSUr 72–84).[631] The storm was cataclysmic, destroying everything in its midst:

> Enlil, to destroy the faithful house, to decimate the faithful man,
> To set the evil eye on the son of the faithful man, the first-born,
> On that day, Enlil brought the Guti out from the mountains
> …
> On that bloody day, mouths were crushed, heads were crashed,
> The storm was a harrow coming from above, the city was struck by a pickaxe,
> On that day, heaven rumbled, earth trembled, the storm never slept,
> The heavens were darkened, they were covered by a shadow,
> The sun lay down at the horizon, the dust passed over the mountains,
> The moon lay at the zenith, the people were afraid. (LSUr 72–84)

In this excerpt from LSUr, storm and invasion imagery merge to describe the Day of Enlil. The onslaught of another of Israel's named enemies is similarly described in Ezek 38.

Ezekiel 38

Ezek 38 describes a time when the hordes of Gog will be assembled to devise an evil plan against God's people; "on that day thoughts will come into your mind …" and "on that day … you will come from your place …" and "on that day … when Gog shall come against the land of Israel," Yah-

[630] There are other texts in Ezekiel where invaders are mentioned in general terms as adversaries and foreigners, but also with specifics. That Yahweh is responsible for sending these is evident from the use of the causative stem on several occasions.
[631] See also UL 4:4–12.

weh's wrath will be roused (38:10, 14, 18). The reason, however, for "this day" concerns the impetus of Yahweh. First, Yahweh compels Gog and all his army to go forth on Israel; "I will bring you forth" (hiphil of *yṣ'*) (38:4), "are you he of whom I spoke that I would bring you (hophal of *bô'*) against the land of Israel" (38:17)? Furthermore, the coming of Gog is from enemy territory, the uttermost parts of the north (38:6, 15), and the onslaught is described with storm imagery; "You will advance, coming like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you," "You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land" (38:9, 16). The invaders of Israel are assembled to carry off plunder, carry away silver and gold, and cattle (38:12–13). Block suggests that the combination of terms in Ezek 38: 9, 12, 15–16 where *šō'â*, which means "destruction," is paired with *'ānān* (describing Gog's onslaught) refers to a destructive storm cloud, a metaphor for a sudden invasion by troops.[632] Thus, Ezekiel merges enemy invasion with storm imagery in this chapter, and he does so with language and imagery that is similar to the laments. The Day of Yahweh compares to the Day of Enlil in that both deities invoke an enemy as an agent to bring on the decreed destruction.

Agent #3: Yahweh's Fire

In the laments, Enlil is responsible for hurling flames on the Sumerian cities. "Upon him who comes from below verily he hurled fire, alas my city has been destroyed. Enlil upon him who comes from above verily hurled the flame" (LU 259–260). In Ezekiel fire is another agent of destruction used by Yahweh. The possessive noun "my fire" is never used to indicate to whom the fire belongs. However, fire clearly originates with Yahweh. He either controls and kindles the fire himself or authorizes another agent to do so. These things are especially noticeable in Ezekiel 8–11, the vision of abandonment. First, one finds fire and burning coals among the whirling wheels and between the cherubim, the place where Yahweh was understood to dwell (10:2, 6–7). In this way fire originates with Yahweh. Second, Yahweh commands and authorizes the man in linen (another agent) to "Go in among the whirling wheels underneath the cherubim; fill your hands with burning coals from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the

[632] Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 444. But quite unexpectedly, Yahweh's wrath will be roused against Gog (38:18) and Yahweh will summon terror against Gog (38:19). Yahweh enters into judgment with Gog and the description of that is also with storm imagery, "I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples that are with him, torrential rains and hailstones, fire and brimstone … then they will know that I am the Lord" (38:22).

city" (10:2).[633] The man clothed in linen went in and stood beside a wheel (10:6). Immediately a cherub places fire into the hands of the linen-clad man, who in turn took it and went out, and apparently hurled the fire on the city (10: 7–8).[634]

Agent #4: Yahweh's package of destructive agents

Clearly the laments do not describe packages of destructive agents belonging to Enlil. However, Yahweh possesses a package of destructive agents. They are noteworthy because, again, they underscore who the real agent of destruction actually is in Ezekiel. The sword is mentioned along with famine and pestilence[635] or with famine, pestilence and wild beasts as Yahweh's three/fourfold package of destructive agents.[636] Although the five lists are analogous, Ezek 5:16–17 is especially informative since it highlights the agent's of destruction as belonging to Yahweh. In the context of Ezek 5, Yahweh is venting his anger because of the abominations in the city of Jerusalem. As a result the city will be besieged. Destruction will come because Yahweh is the one who unleashes his destroying agents. Clearly with Yahweh as the subject of the Piel verb, it distinguishes the agents as his. First Yahweh states, "When I 'loose' (*šillaḥ*) against them my deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction …." Yahweh's arrows target Jerusalem with famine so severe that it destroys (*lĕmašḥît*) …. Furthermore, he declares, "I will send 'famine' (*rāʿāb*) and 'wild beasts' (*ḥayyâ rāʿâ*) against you, and they will rob you of your children, 'pestilence' (*deber*) and 'blood' (*dām*) shall pass through you; and I will bring the sword upon you."[637]

In summary, the preceding discussion has shown that Yahweh, like Enlil, comes in storm imagery to rain down on his enemies. In so doing he

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[633] Admittedly, it is not clear who is speaking in 10:2. However, when Ezekiel sees the semblance of a throne, one expects, based on the vision in chapter one, that the man seated on it is Yahweh speaking (cf. 1:26).

[634] In other places Ezekiel speaks of Yahweh's metaphorical fire, an expression of his divine anger. This is most noticeable when Ezekiel is commanded to set his face toward the Negev and preach against the forest of the Negev; the use of the causative stem of *yṣt* shows who is responsible for the fire; "I will kindle a fire in you …." (Ezek 21:3–4 [Eng. 20:45–49]). Likewise, in a rather shocking text that speaks of the full measure of God's wrath on the house of Israel, the two causative verb forms used create the same idea; "As men gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace to blow upon it the fire in order to melt it, so I will gather in my anger and in my wrath and I will put you in (hiphil of *nûaḥ*) and melt (hiphil of *ntk*) you, I will gather you and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath" (Ezek 22:20). In Ezek 21:36 [Eng. 21:31] Yahweh also causes his fire to blow upon Nebuchadnezzar.

[635] Ezek 6:11; 7:15; 12:14, 16.

[636] Ezek 5:17; 14:17, 21.

[637] A similar list is found in Ezek 28:23 but it concerns execution of destruction by Yahweh on Sidon.

is the primary agent of destruction. But Yahweh also utilizes enemy invasion, fire, and his fourfold package of destructive agents to do his biddings.[638] In this way, another reflex of the city lament genre is observable in Ezekiel, *divine agents of destruction*.

DESCRIPTIONS OF DESTRUCTION IN EZEKIEL

Yahweh and his authorized agents bring great destruction to Jerusalem. As a result, the land of Israel and all of Israelite society will be overturned. All social, political, and religious customs will be wiped away. Ezekiel describes the totality of that destruction more than its details. This concern (the totality of destruction) is at the heart of the comparison with the laments presented below. Since Dobbs-Allsopp has conveniently categorized destruction in the laments, destruction in Ezekiel will, therefore, be surveyed under three separate headings, following Dobbs-Allsopp: descriptions of destruction on the city, environs, and temple; descriptions of destruction on the people; and descriptions of destruction on Israelite social, religious, and political customs.[639]

Descriptions of Destruction on the City, Environs, and Temple

Descriptions of destruction in the laments could be characterized as geocentric in nature. That is to say, destruction "travels" from the periphery to the center, right into the heart of Sumerian society. The enemy's attack first starts in the outskirts of a given city. The enemy then proceeds to attack the city proper which culminates in the destruction of the temple(s). This geocentric description of destruction shows complete and widespread damage.[640]

Certain blocks of material in Ezekiel also describe the totality of Jerusalem's destruction by using a geographical focal point. Scrutinizing the whole of Ezek 4–7 reveals a geographical movement that has often gone unnoticed. The emphasis in chapters 4–7 seems to be on describing the totality of the upcoming destruction on Jerusalem. One of the primary ways this is achieved is through a geographical focal point indicated by the different designations used for the land in these chapters. For example:

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[638] A full list of all the agents of destruction include: Yahweh (1:4); the sword (chapter 21); enemy invasion, more specifically, the Babylonian king (chapter 21); the man clothed in linen, and fire (9:3; 10:2); wild beasts (14:15, 21; 33:27; 34:25–31).
[639] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 66–75.
[640] See chapter one.

Chapter 7	Destruction on *ʾadmat yiśrāʾēl* and *ʾarbaʿat kanĕpôt hāʾāreṣ*
Chapter 6	Destruction on *hārê yiśrāʾēl*
Chapters 5 & 4	Destruction on *yĕrûšālayim* or *ʿîr*

Broadly speaking, destruction commences with the periphery (7), touches Judah's environs (6), and then moves to the center (5 & 4). This backwards scheme is to be understood in light of Ezekiel 8–11 and the notion that divine abandonment logically points backward to the destruction in chapters 7 through 4. That is, once Yahweh has abandoned the land, destruction sets in systematically. In this way, Ezekiel's description of destruction starts at the periphery and moves inward, a similar movement to the laments.

More specifically, chapter 7 declares that the scale of the alarming disaster (7:5) is such that it, in fact, leads to the nation's "end" (*qēṣ*).[641] Yahweh addresses "the land of Israel" (*ʾadmat yiśrāʾēl*) and declares doom upon "the four corners of the land" (*ʾarbaʿat kanĕpôt hāʾāreṣ*). Both of these designations are significant with respect to the totality of the destruction and the geocentric movement. The former phrase, *ʾadmat yiśrāʾēl*, occurs only in Ezekiel.[642] In Ezekiel it is a term that represents national identity, the basis upon which one finds security and well being.[643] This national disaster will cut to the core of Israel's security and identity as a people of Yahweh. Devastation is also coming upon "the four corners of the land." This figure of speech, *ʾarbaʿat kanĕpôt hāʾāreṣ*, can occur with or without "four," yet typically expresses the eschatological end of the whole earth.[644] Here in Ezekiel the eschatological end is not in sight. Rather, Ezekiel uses a term that carries a universal scope to highlight the end of Jerusalem, her environs, and of the whole land of Judah as a result of the destruction.[645] With the mention of "four corners" one is to expect that everything in between those corners (namely, all cities and towns in Judah) will not escape the devastation.[646] Thus the description of destruction in chapter 7 starts broadly and concerns geography.

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[641] It appears five times: Ezek 7:2–3 [3x]; 7:6 [2x]; Zeph 1:2; see also Jer 51:13; Amos 8:1–2 for the announcement of "the end" in other prophets. But it is significant that the same term also appears in Lam 4:18 (the formal lament) for the end of Jerusalem; "men dogged our steps so that we could not walk in our streets; our end drew near; our days were numbered; for our end had come."

[642] It is found a total of 17 times (11:17; 12:19, 22; 13:9; 18:2; 20:38, 42; 21:7, 8 [Eng. 2, 3]; 25:3, 6; 33:24; 36:6; 37:12; 38:18, 19).

[643] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 248–249.

[644] Isa 11:12; 24:16; Job 38:13.

[645] Contra Block who takes the phrase to highlight the severity of the disaster rather than geographical scope (Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 249).

[646] The phrase might also be compared to the Akkadian expression of totalty, *kippat erbette* "circle of the four" or circumference of the quarters of the world (CAD, 8:399; AHW, 482).

In chapter 6 the language suggests a narrower focus for the destruction, the city's environs. Ezekiel is to set his face toward "the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them" or the hill country of Judah (6:2). In chapter 6, Yahweh speaks to the "mountains of Israel" and declares doom upon them. The designation *hārê yiśrā'ēl*, "mountains of Israel," is only found in Ezekiel.[647] While the designation "mountains of Israel" is, indeed, a synecdoche for the whole land, a specific geography is in view. Israel's mountains, hills, ravines, and valleys, will experience destruction (i.e. places of both high and low elevations). These represent places typically associated with syncretistic worship but not exclusively. In fact, Ezek 6:6 makes it clear that no matter where one might find *bāmôt* and cultic paraphernalia associated with it, Yahweh is driven to exterminate idolatry from the land. Habitations from the wilderness to Riblah/Diblah (from south to north), places clearly outside hilly terrain and far from Jerusalem, will also experience Yahweh's wrath (6:14). Yahweh's sword especially strikes cultic installations and their worshippers in the entire land. In this manner the destruction mentioned in chapter 6 has moved away from the periphery and is more nuanced.

Then in chapters 5 and 4 destruction goes to the city center. In Ezekiel's mimes [648] the term is used four times.[649] The description is a city under siege.[650] The proper name Jerusalem appears 4 times.[651] Perhaps Ezek 5:5 is the climactic point of all of Ezekiel's mimes. In the event that Ezekiel's audience might have misunderstood the meaning of his gestures, Yahweh interprets it and leaves no ambiguity. The city that will come under siege (4:1–8), experience famine (4:9–17), and undergo death by sword, famine, and disease (5:2), "is Jerusalem" says Yahweh (5:5). And because of her pristine position (5:5b), being placed in the center of the nations, all can witness her demise. Thus the use of the noun "city," along with the proper name Jerusalem, keeps all eyes on Jerusalem's fate first and foremost. In these chapters the destruction has now penetrated the city center, the heart of Judean society.[652] It has "traveled" from periphery to center in a manner similar to descriptions of destruction in the laments.[653]

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[647] This literary device occurs 17 times and refers figuratively to the whole land of Israel (Ezek 6:2,3; 19:9; 33:28; 34:13, 14a, 14b; 35:12; 36:1a, 1b, 4, 8; 37:22; 38:8; 39:2, 4, 17).

[648] The intent here is not to explain the mimes, something done with precision elsewhere by other scholars. Rather, it is to highlight the broad geographical impact of Jerusalem's destruction.

[649] Ezek 4:1, 3; 5:2 [2x].

[650] Ezek 4:2 [2x], 3 [2x], 7, 8.

[651] Ezek 4:1, 7, 16; 5:5.

[652] It is interesting to note that in Ezek 24:2 where we are told that the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem it is without details. Additionally, with the speech from the fugitive in Ezek 33:21 that the city had fallen, one anticipates all the details pertaining to it to follow. This is not the case. The reader is simply notified of the tragedy and without further ado, Ezekiel's dumbness disappears and he receives yet another word from Yahweh. Perhaps this

Destruction on the Temple

Yahweh's abandonment of his shrine in Ezek 8–11 is an omen that destruction will, inevitably, follow. Neither in these chapters nor elsewhere in the book are descriptions of the destruction pertaining to the temple comparable to the laments. In fact, unlike the laments, Ezekiel offers little to no physical descriptions of destruction on the Jerusalem temple as one might expect.[654] Ezek 8–11 does, however, describe a "spiritual" destruction of sorts, one whereby Israel seems to be portrayed even as the enemy. Perhaps Ezekiel is transforming the lament feature of destruction (as it pertains to the temple) to suit his own purposes. This literary transformation is most notable with Ezekiel's role as an eye witness to activities in the temple precincts.

The escort moves Ezekiel progressively through the temple to witness two things, namely, Yahweh's departure from his shrine and various temple abominations. As Ezekiel is touring the temple precincts, instead of witnessing the physical devastation to the temple, as is described in the laments, he quite unexpectedly sees another kind of devastation. Israel's cultic abominations seem to have wrought destruction to Yahweh's temple in a manner reminiscent of the attacking enemy in the laments.

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is because some of the details are already described; thus the announcement itself marks an end to any further descriptions of destruction. They are no longer necessary. See chapter six on restoration for more of a discussion on this topic.

[653] Conversely, if one starts with Ezek 4–7 and 8–11 the entire section could be outlined in the following way:

Chapter 4 & 5	Destruction on *yĕrûšālayim* or *ʿîr*
Chapter 6	Destruction on *hārê yiśrāʾēl*
Chapter 7	Destruction on *ʾadmat yiśrāʾēl* and *ʾarbaʿat kanĕpôt hāʾāreṣ*
Chapters 8–11	Divine Abandonment

In this scheme, destruction starts with the core of Jerusalem, moves to its environs, then to the entire land. Divine abandonment seems to summarize it all. Clearly, the nature of the movement here differs slightly from the laments. Yet Ezekiel still expresses totality of destruction in a comparable way to the laments. Either scheme, however, reveals a geocentric focus due to the designations used. The main point concerns the city of Jerusalem and its utter destruction.

[654] Ezek 7:22 states that robbers shall enter and profane it, and make Yahweh's precious place desolate. This seems to be the only place where physical descriptions of destruction on the temple are in view.

Ezekiel	Laments
First, Ezekiel is poised at the gateway of the altar, the outer court where he had a clear view of the altar and image (8:5–6).	In the laments the enemy is first positioned at the door of the city gate.
Second, Ezekiel is moved to the door of the inner court where he sees a hole in the wall. Upon penetrating it further he sees images and censers (8:7–13).	The enemy surrounds the temple and the wall is shaken.
Third, Ezekiel is taken to northern gateway of the temple gate and door. This gives him full view of the temple and women weeping (8:14–15).	The enemy penetrates the temple gate and door. This gives him full view of the inner wall.
Fourth, Ezekiel goes to the inner court of the temple, witnesses astral cult worship. From there he could see Holy of Holies (8:16, 18; 9:3).	The enemy has access within the shrine where sacred symbols and treasures are defiled.

Thus, Ezekiel might be adapting the destruction feature to fit the orthodox view of the prophetic concept of sin. Instead of seeing the physical destruction of the temple, he sees a "spiritual" destruction. Likewise, instead of a foreign army, the vision portrays the house of Israel as the enemy due to her covenantal faithlessness. Furthermore, Yahweh leaves at his own pace and volition. He is neither captured nor forced out by an intruder, revealing his sovereignty over the circumstances.

It seems, therefore, that this broad sweep across the literary terrain of Ezek 4–11 has revealed an intentional geocentric interest. Ezekiel describes a systematic geographical movement of destruction on the city, environs, and entire land. The purpose of this is to highlight the utter and total devastation to the city, much as in the laments. One can, therefore, understand Ezekiel's geocentric descriptions of destruction against the backdrop of the lament genre. He seems to be creatively adapting the genre, something especially evident in the temple tour.

Descriptions of Destruction on the People

In the laments, the plight of the people suffering from the destruction is graphic. They experience slaughter, famine and exile.[655] Ezekiel speaks of the house of Israel's sufferings with similar categories and language.[656]

Human Slaughter

As it relates to slaughter, people in the laments are completely and indiscriminately massacred. Young and old, child and parent, maidens and lads, are destroyed since the storm does not distinguish. As a result, images of human slaughter are so numerous that they are likened to stacks of corpses piled high in the streets.[657] These two points, the indiscriminate nature of the killing, and the resultant numerous corpses, are the specific items for comparison in Ezekiel.

With respect to human slaughter in Jerusalem, Yahweh makes it clear he is not a respecter of persons and that many victims will fall, something most apparent in the vision of abandonment (Ezek 8–11). The executioners mentioned in the vision of abandonment are not only commanded to kill mercilessly, but are also commanded to slay the defenseless weaker ones; "slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women."[658] A merciless annihilation (*taharĕgû lĕmašḥît*) is in view (9:6).

With respect to a large number of deceased, Yahweh, as a result of the slaughter, commands the executioners to fill the courts of the temple with

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[655] Again, for the sake of convenience, this categorization follows Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 70–72.

[656] Chapter 12 (inhabitants of Jerusalem); chapter 13 (prophets); chapter 14 (elders); chapter 17 (kings); chapter 18 (individual souls); chapter 19 (three kings); chapter 20 (elders) and chapter 22 (princes and people).

[657] For example, UL speaks of the devastating results of the enemy on the people; "they massacred its populace they finished off young and old alike" (UL 4:27). Likewise, NL states "because its maidens (and) lads have been heaped up into piles – it utters: "Woe"! Because their blood has soaked the ground like raining mist – it ceases not to weep" (NL 66–67). Of note is LU because it comments on how the slain filled the great gates, squares, all the streets, and places where festivities took place,

> In the great gate, where there was parading, the corpses were placed;
> In the squares where feasts were held, they were placed head to head;
> In all the streets where there was parading, the corpses were placed;
> In the places, where the festivities of the land took place, the people were piled up (LU 213–216).

See also, LU 213–216; UL2a:6; LU 213–216; EL 2:5; UL 4:27; EL 1:20; LU 400–403; NL 66–67.

[658] Ezek 9:5–7; 11:6–12.

the slain (9:7).[659] This merciless slaughter producing numbers of corpses is described elsewhere in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel chapter 6, the enemy, Yahweh, brings his sword against all idolatrous places and persons. With respect to the latter, Yahweh states in Ezek 6:5 that he will personally "place" (*nātan*) the corpses of the people of Israel before the idols they worshipped. Those places where the slain will be "stacked" include round about their altars, upon every high hill, on all the mountain tops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing odor to all their idols (6:13). The "geography" of this verse indicates that large numbers of corpses are in view; they will presumably be stacked throughout the land.[660] These examples represent graphic images of the complete and indiscriminate nature of destruction on people in Jerusalem.

Famine and Hunger

With respect to hunger and famine, the laments offer vivid descriptions. What seems to be emphasized is the severity and widespread nature of the famine. The severity of the famine is such that neither king nor the gods have their fill as a result of the famine in the land.[661] But famine is also widespread. As LSUr concludes, "Ur inside it is death, outside it is death, Inside it we die of famine, Outside it we are killed by the weapons of the Elamites…."[662] Not only is famine severe and widespread, but along with weapons of warfare, loss of life occurs. In this way, the full effects of devastation upon the people of Ur are described.[663] Thus, loss of life from the severity and widespread nature of famine or warfare provide the basis for this comparison with Ezekiel.

The plight of the people concerning famine and hunger strikes the reader in Ezekiel. As a result of the siege, the famine in Jerusalem will be severe.

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[659] It is worth mentioning that, in the same vision, Yahweh accuses Israel of multiplying her slain and filling her own streets with the slain (11:6). Ironically, Israel is the enemy in this case.

[660] Utter and complete annihilation, but without the mention of corpses, is further mirrored in other texts of Ezekiel. For example, when Yahweh unsheathes his sword it performs its work on *both* the righteous and the wicked; against all flesh (Eng. 21:3–4). The emphasis here is obviously the indiscriminate nature of the slaughter. Likewise, the language of killing sons and daughters who were left behind in Jerusalem is another expression of indiscrimination of the slaughter; "Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the desire of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind will be slain" (24:21). And concerning Oholah and Oholibah Yahweh says, "And the host shall stone them and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses" (23:47).

[661] LSUr 303–311.

[662] LSUr 390–401.

[663] Dobbs-Allsop, *Weep*, 72. Another famine related text in LSUr is noteworthy. "Those of the city who were not given over to weapons, died of hunger" (LSUr 389).

In the mime that unfolds in Ezek 4:9–11, the severity of the famine is noted by Ezekiel's meager rations of food and water. His food intake was to consist of roughly one cup and his water intake less than a quart.[664] Even more graphic of the severe nature of the famine is Ezek 5:10. As a consequence of the siege people would waste away and have to resort to cannibalism as a means of sustenance; "fathers shall eat their sons in the midst of you, and sons shall eat their fathers …."

But famine is also widespread, a point highlighted in Ezek 7:15, which states: "The sword is without; pestilence and famine within; he who is in the field dies by the sword; and him that is in the city famine and pestilence devour." The point of the inside-outside language is to reflect the spatial scope of the devastation on the people. This text is reminiscent of LSUr texts with respect to the widespread nature of the famine. First, like LSUr 399–401, it uses the inside-outside language to describe devastation on the people of Jerusalem.[665] Second, like LSUr, it mentions the sword[666] and famine together.[667] Thus, like the laments, Ezekiel discusses loss of life from combat and starvation to highlight the plight of people.[668] But the citizens of Jerusalem will undergo more devastation.

Exile

Another aspect of the plight of the city's inhabitants in the laments concerns their exile. That is to say, the people are spoken of as dispersed, ones who departed from their city. They have fled their dwelling places and are described as ones carried off.[669] More specifically, the king (its shepherd) is singled out as one who has been seized by the foe and brought to a foreign country (Elam). The text reads as follows: "That its shepherd (living) in terror in the palace be seized by the foe, that Ibbi-Sin be brought to the land of Elam in a trap – from Mt. Zabu on the 'breast' of he sea, to the boundary of Anshan – that like a sparrow which has fled its 'house,' he returns not to his city …."[670] The language of exile with respect to people and the king is the basis for comparison with Ezekiel.

In Ezekiel the plight of Jerusalem's inhabitants and her kings also concerns their exile. The texts that speak of exile can be divided into three categories: those that refer to people already in exile, those that refer to people who have yet to experience exile, and those that refer to the exile of

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[664] E. M. Cooke, "Ezekiel," *ISBE*, 4:1054.
[665] LSUr 399–401.
[666] The sword in Ezekiel could be likened to the weapons in the city laments.
[667] LSUr 389.
[668] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 72.
[669] NL 219, 44; LU 283–285; and LSUr 405.
[670] LSUr 34–37. Note also UL 2a:3, although a broken line, it reveals that Sumer's king has gone to an enemy land.

the king. Exile is envisioned in numerous places for the city's citizens,[671] for King Zedekiah,[672] for King Jehoahaz,[673] and for King Jehoiachin.[674]

Perhaps the notion of exile is best illustrated in relation to the house of Israel and their prince in the allegory of the two eagles in Ezekiel 17. Of note is Yahweh's specific interpretation of the allegory (17:11–21). Jerusalem's kings and her princes will be seized and brought to Babylon when the king of Babylon visits Jerusalem. The king of Babylon is clearly Yahweh's agent, as can be seen in the following:

> For, thus says the Lord concerning Zedekiah and the survivors, I (Yahweh) will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring (*hiphil*) him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treason he has committed against me. And all the choicest of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken. (Ezek 17:20–21)

Thus, in summation, one observes that Jerusalem's kings and her inhabitants will suffer exile, slaughter, and famine. In this way their destruction is spoken of in similar terms to the people in the laments.

Descriptions of Destruction on Israelite Social, Religious and Political Customs

As one might expect, the entire fabric of Sumerian society was interrupted due to the destruction. Their social, religious and political customs all suffered. The laments describe these societal interruptions, especially as it relates to politics and the cult in the reversal of expected norms. Survivors act unnaturally towards one another; people cannot perform their normal tasks; clergy neglect their offices; and cultic ceremonies are interrupted. Political systems fall apart. The king cries and is exiled.[675] All of this results in chaos and the breakdown of law and order.[676]

Ezekiel describes a similar breakdown at these levels. Socially, the people are palsied by terror. This implies they are not able to function in their normal capacities (7:27b). Economically, everyone will go out of business. Normal tasks such as buying and selling, celebrating and mourning over business deals, will not take place due to the effects of destruction on the

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[671] Ezek 4:13; 6:8–9; 11:16; 20:23; 22:15.
[672] Ezek 12:10; 17:12–14; 19:10–14.
[673] Ezek 19:1–4.
[674] Ezek 19:5–9. In the context of restoration, exile is also spoken of (36:19, 39:23, 28); the Egyptians also experience exile in 29:12, 30:4, 30:23, and 32:9.
[675] LSUr 34–37; 104–106.
[676] See Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 73–74.

economy (7:12–13). The religious and political infrastructures will deteriorate. This is revealed especially in Ezek 7:26–27, which states, "Disaster comes upon disaster, rumor follows rumor; they seek a vision from the prophet, but the law perishes from the priest, and counsel from the elders" (7:26). Essentially, Israel's cultic personnel are rendered ineffective. In other words, recourse to religious sources from which Israel received guidance would fail; a word of hope from a prophet, a legal ruling from a priest, would cease. Likewise, Israel's political system will be severely disrupted. The king is ineffective. Rather than reign with law and order, "the king mourns and the prince is wrapped in despair" (7:27). As a result of destruction and exile the king's aides are scattered (12:14), and there is no scepter for a ruler (19:14). Thus, a huge leadership vacuum exists. Ezek 21:25–26 refers to the removal of Zedekiah's kingship and the great reversal of the norm in the monarchy and Israelite society, it states, "let things not remain as they are, exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high." Indeed, all of Israelite society will be interrupted as a result of the destruction.

Thus, the concern of Ezekiel is to describe the totality of the destruction, something similar to the laments. In so doing, portraits of devastation on the city, land, temple, the people, and all structures in society occupy a large portion of the book. *Destruction* appears to be another reflex of the city lament genre found in Ezekiel.

SUMMARY

The differences notwithstanding, I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter that Yahweh seems to be characterized like Enlil in the laments. He has agents of destruction at his disposal to carry out the destruction that he decreed. Finally, I observed what destruction in Ezekiel looks like in comparison with the laments. In all of this one can see reflexes of lament features in Ezekiel and their adaptation to his context.

But it is a well known fact that within Ezekiel ruination of the entire land, including the temple, and of the people (human slaughter, famine, and exile) has to do with the covenantal curses (Lev 26; Deut 28–30) so often used by the prophets; thus, so the argument goes, their mention here in Ezekiel is not surprising. In other words, traditional interpretations typically assert that it is not a link to Sumerian communal laments that provides the backdrop for understanding sin and judgment, but rather Ezekiel's covenantal framework. The argument presented here does not deny this.

Dobbs-Allsopp has posed an important question in his study on lament features found in the oracles against the nations that effects the current discussion in Ezekiel. How can one explain the coincidence of the motifs especially of slaughter, famine, and exile in both the city lament genre and

covenantal curses found in prophetic books?[677] Dobbs-Allsopp highlights two possibilities. One possibility might be that both the city laments and covenantal curses draw on a common stock of imagery depicting destroyed or ruined cities. Another option suggests that the incorporation of curse motifs into passages with city lament features "resulted from attraction, since the motifs are overtly concerned with ruined cities."[678] In fact, the argument presented in this work takes seriously this notion of attraction and even carries it a step further relative to the whole book of Ezekiel. That is to say, with Jerusalem's destruction as one of the main points of the book, it is understandable that Ezekiel might be attracted to the lament literary style. Ezekiel's nearness to Nippur might allow for such a possibility. Moreover, the scroll incident makes this a reasonable suggestion. There remains one more feature to explore. Chapter six discusses the feature of *restoration* in Ezekiel.

[677] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 62, 66–67. The question materializes in his work with respect to three other motifs that surface in the laments and prophetic literature, namely, taunts of passers-by, imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Jerusalem inhabited by wild animals (66–67).
[678] Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX: UNDERSTANDING RESTORATION IN EZEKIEL IN LIGHT OF THE MCL

INTRODUCTION

The chapters of death and destruction in Ezek 4–24 give way to life and reconstruction (Ezek 34–48).[679] The restoration process described in Ezekiel finds significant parallels with both LSUr and NL, but especially the latter. A few general points of correspondence may be observed initially between Ezekiel and NL. First, both NL and Ezekiel deal with the topic at great length. Each devotes about half of its literary space to restoration.[680] Second, in both texts the elements of restoration mentioned reflect the inversion or reversal of the first part of the text describing the disaster. For example, the second half of the lament (*kirugus* 6–12) deals with restoration and represents a reversal of Sumer's disasters described in *kirugus* 1–5. Likewise, Ezek 34–48 represents an inversion of Jerusalem's disasters detailed in Ezek 4–24. Third, there seems to be a deliberate sequencing of events concerning the program of restoration in Ezekiel and NL.

The sequence is as follows. By means of Enlil's favorable decree and through the agency of the shepherd king, Išme-Dagan, Sumer's full restoration takes place. Under his leadership people live in peace and experience prosperity. As a result, Enlil is exulted as sovereign over all the earth.[681] Similarly, Yahweh is ultimately responsible for restoration of his city, people, and temple. By means of his favorable decree announced through the covenant of peace, Yahweh accomplishes restoration.[682] Yahweh's primary agent for carrying out restoration is David, Israel's divinely appointed shepherd.[683] On account of David's leadership people live in ultimate peace and security and experience utopian days of prosperity (Ezek 37:26). To that end, Yahweh is exalted as sovereign over all the earth (Ezek 37:28).[684] Thus, both Yahweh and Enlil have a change in disposition which becomes the catalyst for the subsequent reforms (re-gathering people, new leadership, the new sanctuary, and utopian days of peace and prosperity).

This chapter seeks to understand restoration in Ezekiel in light of the presentation of the theme in the city laments, but especially in comparison with NL. A necessary first step, however, towards that goal is to observe

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[679] For a study specifically on Ezekiel 40–48 see, J. D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48* (HSM 10; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).
[680] NL *kirugu* 6–12; Ezek 25–48.
[681] *kirugus* 4; 6–11; 12; LSUr 466–511. The LSUr and NL, however, map out restoration more fully than the other three laments (UL, LU, and EL). See chapter one.
[682] Ezek 34:25–31; 37:24–28.
[683] Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25.
[684] Unlike the laments, there are no pleas for Jerusalem's restoration or for Yahweh's return to his temple in Ezekiel. Rather, the text simply offers a narrative description of restoration, a theme of considerable interest in the latter half of the book.

how Ezekiel anticipates restoration in Ezek 24:15–18. It is also imperative to examine the notion of restoration and its relationship (if any) to the oracles against foreign nations (Ezek 25–32),[685] elements of restoration in the official announcement of the city's fall (Ezek 33:21), and finally the actual program for restoration established in Ezek 34–48 (the place where most parallels with NL are exhibited).

RESTORATION IN EZEKIEL

Anticipating Restoration: Ezekiel 24:15–24; 25–27 Transitioning from Death to Life

Yahweh informs Ezekiel that he is about to take away his wife, the delight of his eyes. Yet when this occurs Ezekiel is prohibited from performing the rites of mourning. Rather, he is to put on both his turban and sandals. The next day his wife dies and he does what Yahweh commanded. The people inquire concerning the meaning of his actions. He informs them that they will also do as he has done when Yahweh takes away the delight of their eyes, the sanctuary in Jerusalem. How does this passage anticipate restoration, and ultimately the transition from death to life?

As stated previously, the actions of Ezekiel in Ezek 24:17 could point to the end of his extended mourning period, something realized when the city falls (33:21–22).[686] The prohibition not to mourn together with donning certain garments (turban and sandals) may indicate something positive rather than signify only a deep loss. The element of hope imbedded in the narrative must be accounted for through the various commands. On this basis, the symbolism of Ezekiel's actions would have prepared the exiles to expect a transition from destruction to reconstruction. In this way, Ezekiel as a *môpēt* or "sign" is crucial. He represents a hidden reality that will, no doubt, be revealed. Indeed, "the exiles will do as Ezekiel has done because his sign manifests the certainty of their restoration …."[687] Thus Ezek 24:15–18 anticipates restoration for these reasons.

The passage also seems to function as a literary hinge. On the one hand, Ezek 24:15–27 points back to earlier material where the theme of destruction unfolds in chapters 4–24. Attention to the city via Ezekiel's dramatic performances functions as a framing device in this section. Ezekiel's ministry commences with a "sign" (*'ôt*) reflecting the siege on the city (Ezek 4:3). Then in a fitting conclusion to chapters 4–24, the prophet is once again a "sign" *môpēt* which indicates the death of the city (Ezek 24:24). The symbolism of the passage announces Jerusalem's end. It communicates

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[685] The abbreviation OAN will be used in what follows.
[686] This was discussed earlier in chapter three.
[687] Odell, "Genre and Persona in Ezekiel," 208.

the complete and utter separation of Yahweh from his people, and the exiles from their loved ones. Nearly all the oracles against Judah in between this literary framework reveals Israel's lamentable situation. On the other hand, the text points forward to the theme of restoration first anticipated with the OAN (Ezek 25–32), but then realized in chapters 34–48 with the detailed program for restoration.

Restoration and the Oracles against the Nations (Ezekiel 25–32)

Perhaps less obvious, the oracles against the nations also anticipate restoration in the book. Generally, scholars understand these oracles in the prophetic books as a literary link between prophecies of doom and salvation.[688] L. Boadt characterizes the weakness of scholarship best with regard to this simplistic approach.[689] He believes the oracles are devalued and, therefore, neglected. He correctly observes, "Rarely does a commentator integrate the oracles against the nations into a summary of the prophet's theology."[690] It is a well known fact that the oracles against the nations were intended to be injections of hope, something rooted in the covenantal promises of restoration found in the Pentateuch.[691] Commentators regularly remind the reader of the hopeful nature of these oracles.[692] But one should also consider the rationale for their arrangement and placement in a given book. L. Boadt, however, is helpful in this respect with Ezekiel. He comments how the oracles against the nations are intended "to reinforce the program of reconstruction envisioned by the prophet …."[693] Referring to Tyre and Egypt, Boadt comments, "These kings and their fates are a foil against which Ezekiel will set a true theology of Israel's relationship to God in the presentation of chapters 33–48."[694] While this analysis has merit, another interpretation should be considered.

The oracles against the nations represent a necessary first step to Israel's forthcoming restoration.[695] The oracles themselves are carefully integrated and serve as part of Ezekiel's larger theological enterprise – the theme of

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[688] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 3; Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 242.
[689] L. Boadt, "Rhetorical Strategies in Ezekiel's Oracles of Judgment" in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual Criticsim and their Interrelation* (ed. J. Lust; BETL 74; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1986), 182–200.
[690] Ibid., 196
[691] Lev 26:40–45; Deut 30:1–10.
[692] Stuart, *Ezekiel*, 205, 250; Block, *Ezekiel 25–28*, 4–5; Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 68–69.
[693] Boadt, "Rhetorical Strategies," 196.
[694] Ibid., 199.
[695] Davis also notes the pivotal function of the oracles and asserts something similar. She states they are "the necessary prerequisite for the renewal of Israel's life (ch. 37) under the dominion of its God." E. Davis, ""And Pharaoah will Change His Mind …" (Ezek 32:31): Dismantling Mythical Discourse" in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (eds. C. Seitz and K. Greene-McCreight; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 227–228.

mourning that permeates the book. It seems safe to assume that Ezekiel was in mourning, and that Israel's grief is established by the tragic event of Jerusalem's destruction. In response to the tragedy, Ezekiel the mourner participates in mourning rites, something his hard-hearted compatriots were unable to do. In this condition it was expected that friends and neighbors would come and offer comfort. In Israel's case, her neighbors acted like an enemy. Rather than share in the mourner's grief, enemies rejoice.[696] A mourner's grief is only aggravated by the rejoicing of his enemies.[697] The nations mentioned are specifically condemned by Yahweh due to inappropriate words and behavior towards Israel at a time of great loss. The way Ammon and Tyre gloated over the ruination of the house of Judah, and the less than neighborly ways of Moab, Edom, and Philistia caused Israel further grief.[698]

Furthermore, the end of the mourning period (promised earlier) cannot be realized (i.e. restoration cannot commence) until comfort comes.[699] Typically comforters come on the scene to express participation in the ceremony or to offer words of advice to the mourner. The act of comforting can effect the mourner either positively or negatively. When the mourner is comforted, he stops mourning. Conversely, when the mourner is not comforted, he keeps on mourning.[700] The neighboring nations did not provide Israel with the necessary comfort. As a result, Yahweh offers comfort to his people by redressing injustices, thereby inducing the termination of mourning when he confronts these nations.[701] When Zion's oppressors receive their punishment, Israel will be comforted.[702] Only then will the mourning period cease and full restoration begin.[703] Ezek 28:24–26 aptly concludes

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[696] Pham, *Mourning in the ANE and Hebrew Bible*, 29.

[697] Ibid.

[698] Ezek 25:3; 26:2; 25:8; 25:12; 25:15–17. This is true at the personal level of grief as well. For example, Ps 35:15–16 explains, "Yet when I stumbled they were glad and gathered together; they gathered together striking me unawares. They tore at me without ceasing; they put me to the test; they mocked me, gnashing their teeth at me." Likewise after Anat buries Baal she goes to El's mountain, falls prostrate and proclaims, "Now let Asherah and her sons rejoice, the goddess and her array of kinfolk for Baal the conqueror has died, the prince, the lord of the earth has perished" CTA 6.1.39–43; cf. G. A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 73.

[699] Job 2:11; 16:2; Isa 40:1–2; Pham, *Mourning in the ANE and Hebrew Bible*, 27–29.

[700] Ibid., 32–33, 35.

[701] Pham, *Mourning in the ANE and Hebrew Bible*, 185–189.

[702] Contra Davis' interpretation of these oracles. She suggests the OAN represent object lessons and a challenge for Judah. Davis, "And Pharaoh will Change His Mind," 227–228. Joyce (*Ezekiel*, 171–172) adds to Davis' proposal. He equates the OAN in Ezekiel with the roster in Amos 1–2 and asserts that both build up to the surprising announcement of judgment on Israel.

[703] Perhaps this interpretation explains why Babylon is not mentioned in this list of nations. Unlike Babylon, the nation presently oppressing Israel, the surrounding nations were in a position to offer assistance and comfort, but they did not. As a result, Yahweh's confronta-

the cycle of oracles in chapters 25–28.[704] These verses indicate how hurt and contempt will be removed from Israel after Yahweh deals with their neighbors. Security and peace can only be achieved for Israel in this way:

> And for the house of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to *hurt* them among all their neighbors who have treated them with *contempt*. Then they will know that I am the Lord God. Thus says the Lord God, when I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall dwell in their own land which I gave to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell securely in it, and they shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall dwell securely, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God. (Ezek 28:24–26)

Thus, I am suggesting the oracles against the nations might be functioning like the literary equivalent of the arrival of comfort to one experiencing grief. They represent a thematic and literary link from death to life, and are a necessary first step to Israel's forthcoming restoration (Ezek 33–48). If one understands the oracles and their placement in the book in light of the theme of mourning, then the oracles might indirectly represent other "signs" for Israel that mourning is about to end. Only after this does a new status begin for Yahweh's people. Now that he has provided a way for his people to be comforted and start a new beginning, a detailed program of restoration follows in Ezek 33–48. Ironically, this begins with the announcement of Jerusalem's fall.

Restoration and the Fall of Jerusalem: Ezekiel 33:21–22

Approximately two years had passed since Ezekiel lost his wife. It was an event that would have been etched forever in his mind, as well as the exiles. When it was known that the city had fallen, one can only imagine what the

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tion with these nations leads to her needed comfort. Likewise, this interpretation may explain why deliverance for Israel is really not the focal point of these oracles, as is customary in other prophets (Isa 14:1–23; Jer 50:33–34). Judah certainly needs deliverance, yet it seems that Ezekiel's point relates first to the theme of mourning. While Judah is still on the receiving end of Babylon's oppression, it would be inappropriate (premature) for Yahweh to address Babylon in the same manner as these nations.

[704] This, of course, does not include the cycle of poems against Egypt since these oracles commence afterwards in Ezek 29–32. Even Yahweh's condemnation of Egypt in 29:6–7 shows how unreliable Egypt was for Israel to lean on in her time of need. Although Egypt is not as local a neighbor as the other nations mentioned, on account of geography, Egypt was easily accessible to Israel in a way the nations from the east were not.

exiles said, did, and thought. Did they don festive garments in celebration? Did they do all that they were commanded on the basis of Ezek 24:22–24? The text is silent on that matter. However, Yahweh did what he said he would do. He destroyed the city and released Ezekiel from the divine imposition of speechlessness by the time the fugitive arrived with the news of the city's demise (33:21–22). These coterminous events seem to mark the official end to Ezekiel's extended mourning period, something promised earlier (Ezek 24:15–18). Yahweh breaks Ezekiel's "mourning silence" and it serves as a visual aide of hope. Ironically, with the "bad" news from the fugitive, restoration had officially arrived. No longer did they need to anticipate it. They were supposed to start thinking about their hopeful future as a people of God, no matter how hidden that future might have seemed with the arrival of the fugitive.

Furthermore, the placement of the announcement is not random but is quite appropriate. From a chronological perspective one does not expect to hear the news of Jerusalem's fall in Ezek 33:21–22 *after* the literary interruption of the oracles against the nations (Ezek 25–32). One expects to hear of Jerusalem's fall and its subsequent report immediately following the death of Ezekiel's wife (Ezek 24:15–27). However, if one understands the actual news of Jerusalem's fall to inaugurate the status transformation for the remnant (from mourning to joy), then its placement in chapter 33 makes complete sense. The "official" announcement of a new status for Yahweh's people would not be appropriate until she was comforted (her local enemies were destroyed). The formal notification of the city's fall after the oracles against the nations, yet before chapters 34–48, alerts the reader that all threats are gone; restoration can now take place. Chapters 34–48 deliver on that promise.

Program of Restoration: Ezekiel 34–48

The following outline suggests how restoration is realized in this broad division:

> Restoration of righteous leadership (34:1–31)
> Restoration of the land (35:1–36:15)
> Restoration of Yahweh's reputation (36:16–38)
> Restoration of people and unity (37:1–28)
> Restoration permanent: enemies from abroad removed (38:1–39:29)
> Restoration of a temple (40:1–42:20)
> Restoration of Yahweh's presence in the sanctuary (43:1–12)
> Restoration of worship (43:13–46:24)[705]
> Restoring fruitfulness to the land (47:1–12)

[705] Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 379.

Restoration of boundaries and territories of the new city (47:13–48:35)[706]

And although restoration appears to be the dominant theme in chapters 34–48, key elements of it are encapsulated in Ezek 34. Furthermore, the ideas articulated in this chapter seem to radiate throughout the larger section. As such, Ezek 34 provides a logical platform for the discussion.

Ezekiel 34 and its Content

Chapter 34 is a literary unit that contains five principle parts to it: (1) failure of human shepherds and their judgment (34:1–10), (2) Yahweh as the good shepherd (34:11–16),[707] (3) failure of the sheep and their judgment (34:17–22), (4) success of human shepherd David (34:23–24),[708] and (5) the covenant of peace/state of blessedness and prosperity (34:25–31).[709] The shepherding imagery along with the failure/success motif is the context from which ideas of restoration emerge. Essentially, the picture that unfolds is this. Yahweh has had a change in disposition. This causes him to re-gather his people (34:11–16), set up new leadership (34:23–24), and usher in his covenant of peace (34:25–31). These latter three sections will be the focal point in what follows.

Ezekiel 34:11–16: A Change in Yahweh's Disposition

Yahweh's disposition has clearly changed towards his people, land, and temple. The series of verbs in Ezek 34:11–16 reveals his new demeanor. Yahweh will "seek out" (*dāraš*), "look for" (*biqqēr*), "bring out" the sheep from exile (*hôṣî'*); he will "gather" (*qibbēṣ*) them from the countries, "bring" (*hēbî'*) Israel back to their own land, and he will "tend" (*rā'â*) them. Furthermore, he will "bind up" (*ḥābaš*), and "strengthen" (*ḥizzēq*) his sick and injured sheep. He is a good shepherd who, on account of his own righteous leadership, re-gathers and properly nourishes his people (34:13).

Yahweh's actions here are not unlike Enlil who took pity on Nippur. He returned and reunited its people, and brought them back from exile.[710] NL shows Enlil and Ninlil taking counsel together so that they might rescue and liberate the suffering and enslaved blackheaded people and bring them back to Nippur. "Enlil and Ninlil … made the people that had been con-

[706] For a different outline of this section, see Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 272.
[707] The section begins with a *kî* clause; hence, Ezek 34:11–16 is linked to 34:10 and answers how Yahweh's sheep will be rescued.
[708] With the introduction of a new character in Ezek 34:23 the scene changes even though verse 23 is technically connected to the previous section on account of the *waw-consecutive*.
[709] The word of the Lord formula beginning in 35:1 identifies the formal end of chapter 34.
[710] NL 6:159; 7:207–214.

sumed, come (back) to you, gathered the children whose mothers had turned away from them ….”[711] In both Ezekiel and NL the deity is responsible for the re-gathering process. Thus Yahweh’s new disposition is key to the restoration process. Although he was Israel’s enemy, one whose stormy presence raised havoc, he now asserts his goodwill. The agent of destruction becomes the agent of reconstruction.[712]

Ezekiel 34:23–24: The Servant-Shepherd David

“And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.” The scattered whom Yahweh re-gathered are united under one new ruler.[713] Yahweh commissions David as his servant (2x), as Israel’s prince (1x), and shepherd (2x). His role as shepherd is not an uncommon one in the ancient world.[714] He is meant to care for and nourish God’s people (“he shall feed them”) in a way that other shepherds of Israel never did. David is, therefore, the human agent through whom Yahweh’s gracious favors will flow, the blessings of which are actualized in the covenant of peace (Ezek 34:25). In NL Enlil appoints Išme-Dagan as Sumer’s “true shepherd.”[715] He is Enlil’s valiant one, devout king-priest.[716] Išme-Dagan is the human agent through whom Enlil’s gracious favors will flow. Thus David, like the Sumerian savior, is designated as the deity’s shepherd.

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[711] NL 7:211–212.

[712] *Ezekiel 36:8–15 — 34:13, 26 (A Change in Yahweh’s Disposition)*

The restoration of the mountains in Ezek 36 represents an expansion of the promise that Israel would return to her land. Israel could have peace because of dwelling securely in her land. Likewise, in Ezek 36:9–12, Yahweh’s disposition is further evidenced and stated forthrightly, “For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you ….” This text shows how deliberate Yahweh is in the restoration process.

Ezekiel 37:1–28 — 34:16, 30 (A Change in Yahweh’s Disposition)

The valley of dry bones and the union of the two sticks recall the promises of healing and unity. “I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak …”

Ezekiel 39:25, 29 — 34:11–16 (A Change in Yahweh’s Disposition)

With the destruction of enemies from abroad the passage unfolds more of Yahweh’s sentiment towards the remnant. “Therefore, thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel … I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God.” Thus these texts beyond Ezek 34 illustrate how restoration radiates elsewhere in the book.

[713] Ezek 34:13; 36:24; 37:21–28.

[714] Tim Laniak, *Shepherds after my own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (NSBT; Downers Grove: IVP, 2006).

[715] NL 6:174. See also *kirugu* 12.

[716] *kirugu* 12.

The terms of David's reign find further expansion in chapter 37. In addition to the titles "servant," "shepherd," and "prince," used in chapter 34, the designation "king" (*melek*) is given to David; "my servant David shall be king over them" (37:24). David's reign is meant to endure forever (37:25). The fruit of David's reign promises longevity and fruitfulness (37:25). His reign multiplies law abiding citizens who dwell in the land forever in peace and safety (37:24–28). The longevity of peace and fruitfulness can come about because Yahweh's enemies have been dealt with. David's rule causes Yahweh to set his sanctuary in Israel's midst forever. It also allows for Yahweh's name to be exalted (37:27–28).

In terms of fruitfulness and longevity, David's reign is characterized much like that of Išme-Dagan. The Sumerian king causes justice to prevail in the land. The people multiply because they are well cared for, "the blackheaded (people) who had multiplied like ewes, the people having been well-cared for."[717] The duration of his reign also promises great length.[718] His rule promises the rebuilding of the *Ekur* and revival to Sumer's religious life.[719] To that end he establishes utopian times of peace, prosperity, and blessing.[720] Thus, the role of David is intriguing when compared with Išme-Dagan in NL. The designations assigned to David and the fruit of his reign strike cords of similarity with the appointment of the Sumerian ruler.

Ezekiel 34:25–31: The Covenant of Peace

Yahweh's change in disposition along with the selection of a righteous ruler ushers in the covenant of peace, the terms of which are noted in Ezek 34:25–31. Yahweh promises security for his people. Their national security includes protection from wild animals and the removal of oppressive enemies.[721] Security will also be realized through prosperity and fruitfulness of the land.[722] Yahweh also promises to be with his people, a statement of the complete restoration in the relationship (34:30). The results of the covenant of peace find further expression in the book beyond chapter 34. For example, national security is realized when Yahweh avenges Israel's local enemy, and the enemy from abroad.[723] The promise to be with his people

[717] NL 9:264; NL 12:322–323 speak of the multiplication of their numbers.
[718] NL 12:314–318.
[719] NL 6:165.
[720] NL 9:252–264.
[721] Ezek 34:25, 27, 28, 29.
[722] Ezek 34:26, 27, 29.
[723] *Ezekiel 35:1–15 — 34:27–28 (Covenant of Peace)*

The message against Edom in chapter 35 corresponds to the promise of security and victory over plundering. Israel could have peace because her local enemy had been punished. "They shall dwell secure in the land … when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be prey to the nations, nor

corresponds to the vision of the new temple and the return of his presence among his people.[724] Ezekiel speaks of a necessary cleansing in the land as a result of past misdeeds. This is directly tied to the covenant of peace, something that will eventually lead to the promised prosperity.[725]

The covenant of peace might correspond to the decree issuing Nippur's restoration. "O righteous city he has decreed your fate making long your reign."[726] As a result of this favorable decree on Sumer, restoration takes place in the land. The NL notes that in the restoration process, Enlil will avenge what the enemy had done to the city, people and land.[727] It states that Išme-Dagon rebuilds the *Ekur*.[728] It describes how Enlil and Ninlil

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shall the beasts of the land devour them; they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid."

Ezekiel 38–39 — 34:27–28 (Covenant of Peace)

The downfall of Gog shows how the promise of permanence and peace in the land is possible because the enemy from abroad has been cut off. "They shall dwell secure in the land … when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them; they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid."

Most of the local enemies were dealt with earlier in chapters 25–32. However, until Yahweh confronts the enemy from abroad, Israel's peaceful existence in the land is illusory. Thus, chapters 25–32 and 38–39 together allow Israel's restoration to be permanent. All threats (local and abroad) to her peace, security, well-being, and fruitfulness are now removed. The rebuilding phase can move forward.

[724] *Ezekiel 40:1–42:20 — 34:30; 37:26 (Covenant of Peace)*

The vision of the new temple realizes the promises of rebuilding Yahweh's sanctuary. "It shall be an everlasting covenant of peace with them … and I will set my sanctuary in their midst forever more."

Ezekiel 43:1–9 — 34:30; 37:26 (Covenant of Peace)

The return of Yahweh's glory to the newly built temple represents the promise of the divine presence. "They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them."

[725] *Ezekiel 43:13–46:24 — 34:30; 37:24 (Covenant of Peace)*

The restoration of worship that is detailed in this section recalls the declaration that God's people will be able to follow and observe his statutes. "… they shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statues." Israel is enabled to do this because Yahweh has cleansed them. In Ezekiel Yahweh's cleansing pertains more to a spiritual cleansing in the process of restoration; "I will sprinkle clean water" (36:25, 29), "I will save and cleanse; I sanctify Israel" (37:23, 28).

Ezekiel 47:1–12 — 34:26, 29 (Covenant of Peace)

Ezekiel 47:1–12 articulates the promise of fruitfulness and abundance. "… I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase … and I will provide plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land."

Ezekiel 48:35 — 34:30; 37:27 (Covenant of Peace)

The name of the city, "the Lord is there," underscores the promise of the divine presence.

[726] NL 7:203–204.

[727] NL 5:155.

[728] NL 6:165.

erect daises.[729] The eighth *kirugu* reports a city–by–city return of the deities to their respective cities and shrines. Furthermore, a necessary cleansing in the land is desirable. Cleansing is associated with a full return to the natural order of worship. It encompasses both a physical and spiritual cleansing "of the *šuluh-rite* that the foe had suppressed, its sanctification, purification, he commanded him."[730] The ritually purified divine meals are reestablished,[731] "He commanded to sanctify its food, to purify its water, to purify its defiled *me* …," "the *garza* that had been defiled he sanctified for him, the *giguna* he purified for him."[732] Following all of this the poet describes days of incredible prosperity and well-being. The restoration is such that "daylight is everywhere in its midst."[733]

Thus these three sections of chapter 34 show how Yahweh's change in disposition revitalizes the religious life of the remnant; indeed, he has caused Israel's mourning to turn to joy. There has been a clear shift. With the announcement of new leadership, Israel could hope for better days. Her mourning period has passed, and out of death comes life. The ideas encapsulated in Ezek 34 seem to radiate throughout chapters 35–48.[734]

The Ultimate Purpose of Restoration: Exaltation of Yahweh

The exaltation of Yahweh and his sovereignty is a crucial component of the restoration phase of Ezekiel. The entire restoration program seeks to exalt Yahweh's reputation in Israel, but also among the nations. The repeated recognition formula *wĕyādĕʿû kî ʾanî yhwh*, "and they will know that I am Yahweh," reflects this concern throughout many of these chapters in Ezekiel. With respect to Israel, they will know that he is Lord: on account of his favorable disposition established by the covenant of peace (34:30), with the destruction of Mt. Seir (35:9, 12, 15), when he multiplies and prospers them (36:9–11, 38), when he opens the graves and raises Israel from the graves (37:13, 14), at the burial of Gog (39:13, 22), at the sacrificial feast and burial of Gog (39:22), and when all fortunes are restored (39:25–28).

Similarly, the nations will know that he is Lord when he regathers the house of Israel (36:22–23, 36), when he sets David as king and establishes

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[729] NL 7:2–14.
[730] NL 171–172.
[731] Kramer, "Lamentation over the Destruction of Nippur," 26.
[732] NL 280–281, 303.
[733] NL 11:295.
[734] The restoration oracles intentionally answer to the judgment pronouncements made earlier in the book. They reflect a reversal of the disasters that came upon the nation. For example, Ezek 36:1–15 and the message to the mountains is the restoration counterpart to the message of judgment in Ezek 6:1–14. But this is seen in other parts of Ezekiel and not just the restoration division. The glory cloud's removal and return exemplify this recurring pattern (8:1–11:25). This literary convention which utilizes reversal also appears in NL. See chapter one.

his sanctuary in their midst forever (37:28), Yahweh brings Gog on Israel (38:16), Gog is defeated (38:23), and when Yahweh hurls fire on Magog (39:6–7). This progression of knowledge of Yahweh's fame in Israel, and among the nations, comes as a result of his mighty acts of restoration. In this way, Yahweh restores his fame and is exalted as the sovereign throughout the earth.

In the city laments, praise and exaltation of Enlil is also the outcome of his program of restoration in Sumer. As the poet of NL concludes, "The Sumerians and Akkadians in their multitudes, having been well cared for, will forever proclaim the exaltation of Enlil, the controller of heaven and earth."[735] The LU has a similar ending, "O Nanna, thy city which has been returned to its place exalts thee."[736]

SUMMARY

Ezekiel fleshes out restoration in a way that compares at many levels with NL. Now that Yahweh has had a change of heart and has appointed new leadership to affect his covenant of peace, the house of Israel can live again (Ezek 33:10). This is the logical and natural conclusion to the death and destruction in the first half of the book. Death and destruction give way to the second half of the book emphasizing peace, joy, rest, and confidence. A new status begins for the people of God. Perhaps Ezek 48:35 best summarizes this permanent and ideal condition, "And the name of the city henceforth shall be, The Lord is there."[737] Yahweh has provided a way for Israel's mourning to turn to joy. Out of death comes new life. The following chart summarizes the above ideas regarding Ezekiel's program of restoration and its striking corollaries with key elements of the NL.[738]

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[735] Kramer, " Nippur," 4. Likewise, Tinney notes that "the final quatrain serves as a coda to the text in which the events of the composition are summarized and projected into perpetuity, for the customs followed in the preceding ritual were established in order to ensure that the everlasting praise of Enlil will be sung by the people of Sumer" (Tinney, *Nippur*, 181–182; cf. NL 12:319–323).

[736] *kirugu* 11:433.

[737] Ezek 48:35.

[738] Block (*Ezekiel 25–48*, 272) notes that Ezekiel's vision follows common Near Eastern understandings of judgment-restoration traditions. The motifs found in Ezek 40–48 are, therefore, not coincidental. They are even less coincidental given the scroll incident and its implications for the shape of Ezekiel. Although Block does not include NL in his examination, he does include a city lament. This is because the city lament illustrates well the judgment-restoration tradition. Thus, the idea proposed here has merit. My independent examination of the NL for comparison with Ezekiel yielded like observations.

Nippur Lament	Ezekiel
1. Enlil has a change of disposition	1. Yahweh has a change of disposition
2. Appointment of Išme-Dagan	2. Election of David
3. Role and character of Išme-Dagan	3. Role and character of David
4. Rebuilding the *Ekur*	4. Rebuilding the temple
5. Return of the deity	5. Return of Yahweh
6. People return from exile	6. People return from exile
7. Utopian days of peace and prosperity	7. Peace and prosperity established
8. Exaltation of Enlil	8. Exaltation of Yahweh

Given these corollaries and in consideration of Ezekiel's geographical location and the provenience of NL, in particular, it is tempting to assert that the city lament genre influenced his material, something in addition to the scroll. Although such a claim can never be proven, it should be taken seriously given the fact that evidence continues to keep stacking up, even though we cannot pinpoint how Ezekiel might have acquired such knowledge. That Ezekiel possessed awareness of other Mesopotamian texts and used them in varying degrees throughout his work is a point scholars generally agree on. There is other evidence to show beyond the present comparison that, typologically, there is a link between Ezekiel and Mesopotamian materials.

For example, Ezekiel seems to have had acquaintance with other texts that derive from a historical period in close proximity to his own. A Sumerian hymn, a text known by tablet copy from Kuyunjik from the Neo-Assyrian period, specifically from the library of King Assurbanipal, is the construction of Enki's cult boat in Eridu.[739] It has three main sections: the commissioning of the boat's perfect and breathtaking construction, the parts of the boat, and the various gods of Enki's circle who enjoy the boat. Another is the Hymn Šulgi R[740]: The Construction of Ninlil's Cult Boat in Nippur. The hymn contains two principle parts: the commissioning of the boat's construction, and the parts of the boat. In *Enki and the World Order* there is Praise of Enki's Cult Boat and mention of the various lands with which the boats of Enki trade. These texts compare in remarkable ways with Ezek 27 and the oracle about Tyre's ship.[741] The oracle concerning the

[739] See the translation of J. Klein, "Šulgi and Išme-Dagan: Originality and Dependence in Sumerian Royal Hymnology," in *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology Dedicated to Pinhas Artzi* (eds., J. Klein and A. Skaist; Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990), 91–96.
[740] Ibid.
[741] Credit goes to Doug Frayne for bringing this parallel to my attention.

ship of Tyre in the Hebrew Bible lauds the ship's beauty, the parts of the ship, and discusses the lands with which the ship trades.[742] These two hymns provide more evidence of Ezekiel's acquaintance with Mesopotamian literature and that he culled from various genres, so it seems, for the production of his book.[743] It is not surprising, therefore, that the city lament genre is among them; however, the latter provides us with a more substantial parallel than most.

With this discussion on restoration, the examination of city lament features in Ezekiel comes to a close. The following chapter concludes and demonstrates how these features in Ezekiel seem to tie the book together and explain certain things that have long since puzzled scholars.

[742] See Appendix 4 for the texts.

[743] Consider also the conclusions reached by Uehlinger and Müller Trufaut on Ezek 1, "Our suggestions imply that Ezekiel or the authors and redactors who designed his inaugural vision of Ez. 1 and the related vision of Ez. 10 in a redactional process of growing complexity, had some contact with Babylonian scholars trained in matters of theology, cosmology, and astronomy." See Uehlinger and Müller Trufaut in "Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography: Attempts at Further Refinement," 164.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

In this study I have argued that the Mesopotamian city lament genre influenced Ezekiel's work. Ezekiel contains the full repertoire of generic features established by Dobbs-Allsopp, not just a few. It seems, therefore, that the book of Ezekiel is more than a "moderate modulation" of the genre as Dobbs-Allsopp suggested. Admittedly, one does not expect city lament features and their associated motifs to be mapped out so vividly in a prophetic book. This research has shown just how widespread it is.

Although Ezekiel utilizes the city lament and associated motifs for mourning the dead, the book is not a formal lament along the lines of biblical Lamentations. The lament sub-genre has been adapted and used within Ezekiel's own frame of reference, the covenantal framework, the venue whereby he understood Yahweh's interactions with his people. Therefore, Ezekiel incorporates the features in creative ways. Although all the features have undergone some type of modification as a result, four features stand out with respect to necessary and significant adaptations. This pertains to the *weeping goddess*, *assignment of responsibility*, *destruction*, and *divine abandonment*.

With respect to the feature of the weeping goddess, there is a notable adaptation. Ezekiel is the figure who mourns and complains over Jerusalem's lot much like personified Jerusalem in other biblical texts. In Ezekiel the *assignment of responsibility* for the destruction lies squarely with the guilt of the people and Yahweh's anger; something that leads to his abandonment. In the laments no fault is found with the people. The destruction is attributed to divine capriciousness.

The main difference with *destruction* is that in the city laments the wide-scale destruction on the city, environs, sanctuary, and people has already occurred. However, in Ezekiel, it is impending destruction. This is especially so if one understands the oracles in terms of future events. If one maintains that the oracles describe events which are already past, nothing changes, either way, the news is bad. Dobbs-Allsopp argues that, "the city lament mode could be used equally plausibly in both situations."[744] And finally, Israel's sin causes divine abandonment and the ensuing destruction; in the laments, divine abandonment causes the destruction, not human instigation. These, then, represent the most obvious adaptations of the use of the genre in Ezekiel.

I have supplied ample evidence to show that typologically there is a literary link between Ezekiel and the Mesopotamian laments even though no known copies of the laments existed during Ezekiel's time. Ezekiel's geographical location in Nippur (provenience of one of the laments), and his general awareness of other Mesopotamian literature all point to an

[744] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 103 (note #26).

external Mesopotamian literary influence of some type. Collectively, these reflect how Ezekiel might have had access to the genre.

Beyond these external factors, I invoked the scroll, and the events surrounding it, as a crucial piece of internal evidence pointing to a lament subgenre. The scroll promised lamentation, mourning, and woe. The book delivers on that promise. Hence, reflexes of city lament features appear throughout the book. In chapter three *subject and mood*, the *weeping goddess,* and *lamentation* were addressed. The scroll established both the subject matter and mood of the book. It makes Ezekiel a mourner, and he laments like the weeping goddess, albeit with adaptations. In chapter four I examined *assignment of responsibility* and *divine abandonment*. In addition to the scroll, Yahweh takes responsibility through his divine word formulae and his merciless gaze for the upcoming destruction. Further responsibility is assigned to Israel due to the nation's continual misconduct, something that hindered Yahweh's name recognition. Yahweh's anger escalates and he departs in avian-like fashion from Jerusalem. In chapter five *agents of destruction* and *destruction* were considered. After abandoning Jerusalem, Yahweh issues the Babylonians as his primary agent resulting in wide-scale devastation and destruction. Finally, in chapter six, Ezekiel's program of restoration was observed in light of the feature of *restoration*. Out of concern for his reputation, Yahweh takes pity on Israel and gloriously restores his city, people, and land. These eight reflexes are anchored in the literary sub-genre presupposed by the scroll. The scroll, therefore, is an important piece of internal evidence accounting for some of the similarities with city laments.

If, as has been suggested by Davis, Ezekiel committed his own prophecies to writing, and if there is intentionality in the design, it follows that the book's intentional design could also derive from the prophet himself. I am suggesting that the presence of lament features all throughout Ezekiel represents the necessary link between the scroll incident and the fruit of his ministry, a book. Indeed, there seems to be ample evidence to support Davis' general thesis with the specifics of this study.[745] Thus, I see the scroll providing Ezekiel not only with a text[746] but with a specific literary form, namely, the lament form, from which his oracles and their varying genres were compiled. In this respect, Odell's suggestion that Ezekiel appropriated the inscriptional genre for a literary mode, although possible, seems less likely. From an historical point of view, it is yet to be proven that Esarhaddon's inscriptions had continued significance in the mid 6th century or beyond. Furthermore, traversing such an adaptation appears to

[745] This is contrary to Odell (1998, 243) and Darr (1989, 241) who fail to see a connection between the scroll and the book of Ezekiel. Odell discounts Davis' argument and states, "it is not possible to establish a link between the initial episode and the final product of Ezekiel's career–a book" (243).

[746] Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, 51.

be strained, especially in light of the scroll, and the internal evidence of lament features in the book that supports a lament sub-genre. Her view assumes more about Ezekiel's Babylonian schooling than is plausible. The proposal made here does not mean that the prophetic book of Ezekiel requires a genre reclassification. By considering this literary model, it helps us to see how the collection of prophetical oracles works, and why, given the scroll, Ezekiel does not, indeed cannot, mirror other prophetic writings. Although other literary forms may be identified, primarily the text has been modified and affected (structurally and thematically) by the Mesopotamian city lament genre. Indeed, the scroll incident allows for it.

Thus, both the internal and external influences explored above reveal that the book of Ezekiel was patterned after the Mesopotamian city lament genre. Accordingly, this study affirms, along with others, the likelihood of a Mesopotamian setting for the book rather than a Judean setting. This setting shows the influence of non-Israelite traditions on the prophet's presentation. Indeed, the lament matrix helps us to understand much about the book that is, otherwise, puzzling.

With respect to the book's structure and cohesion, the city lament sub-genre gives the noted artistry in Ezekiel's work more of a nuance. The lament lens does seem to make sense of the organizational structure for much of the book. This lens need not exclude an understanding of prophecy as foretelling or editorial activity; indeed, both can be accommodated in this matrix.[747]

To summarize, the sequence of chapters in 1–24 (the oracles against Judah), 25–32 (the oracles against the nations), and 33–48 (the restoration for the remnant) build upon each other to create a logical movement relative to the mourning motif. Broadly speaking, chapters 33–48 represent a counterpoint relationship to 1–24. They indicate it is *a time to rejoice*, a reversal of what Israel's sin had brought about in 1–24, *a time to mourn*.

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[747] With regard to editorial activity, identifying the city lament features even seems to make sense of the redaction layers that many have observed. As is well known, complicated schemes exist for the book's composition with little consensus reached. The city lament features appear to provide a cohesive unity to even the more controversial chapters of the book (Ezekiel 38–48) with respect to such activities. From a redactional viewpoint, those texts deemed as secondary material bear an unusually close "family resemblance" to primary material usually attributed to Ezekiel (so, too, Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 12). Whether the final redaction took place early, late, or somewhere in the middle, I will let the specialists decide the best historical mileu for the process. In light of the *Sitz im Leben* of the MCL and the atmosphere present by the end of the 6th century, I favor an early date with the possibility of an early Post-exilic redaction. The reality of the historical developments relative to the temple, city, land, and monarchy with death, despair and hopelessness prevailing, one could find a rationale for the infusion and use of the city lament genre on the book of Ezekiel. I am aware that some will remain unpersuaded since the city lament genre persists into the 3rd century. This is, indeed, a topic for future study. Regardless, the focus on the editorial end of the redaction as a creative and unifying force in itself may, perhaps, be best understood through this literary model.

Chapters 25–32 provide the necessary bridge between the two sections as signs that mourning will end. This literary framework is reminiscent of the mourning process associated with death or bad news. Death or bad news is the cause for mourning. The mourning process commences and then ends, but only when comfort arrives. After the arrival of comfort the mourner can rejoice and be restored. Perhaps an appropriate way to visualize this is by the following summary:

Ezek 1–24	**24:15–28**	**25–32**	**33:21–22**	**34–48**
A time to mourn Ezekiel the mourner	***THE sign*** mourning will end	***other signs*** mourning will end	***mourning ends*** officially	***A time to rejoice***
OAJ	Prediction of fall	OAN	News of fall	Restoration

This lament framework, in turn, illumines the main point of Ezekiel and enables the story to move forward. The main purpose of Ezekiel is to highlight Israel's sin and its consequences, Yahweh's judgment (the fall of the city). Sin plus judgment equates to death, something clearly explained by Ezekiel; hence, the book shows repeated portraits of death and destruction for Israel. This "death" is triggered by Israel's sins which lead to Yahweh's anger and the departure of his glory from the temple. The nation and individuals must die. Ultimately, death brings lamentation, mourning, and woe; yet out of death comes life.

The unit 1–24 is framed by the mourning motif. In Ezek 2:8 the man becomes a mourner. In 24:15–24 Ezekiel is symbolically enacting Israel's funeral procession. Nearly everything in between this frame reveals Israel's lamentable situation, something showcased by many of the prophet's actions. Starting with the scroll incident and ending with the death of his wife, there is ample evidence showing Ezekiel as a mourner. Indeed, most of what Ezekiel did was meant to communicate to the exiles that it was a time to mourn (esp. Ezek 21:6–7, 12–13). The situation back in Jerusalem demanded that the exiles in Babylon mourn like Ezekiel. As such it was not a time to doubt the death of the community (Ezek 12:27); nor to heed false prophets (Ezek 13); nor to pass the blame on to others (Ezek 18:1–4); nor to question Yahweh's justice (Ezek 18:25, 29); nor a time to hope for the city's preservation or for the safety of loved ones. It was a time to sigh, to groan, to pine away (Ezek 21:6–7, 12–13; 24:18). But hardened, disobedient people such as the exiles in Babylon were unable to grasp the gravity of their circumstances. They were incapable of mourning. Thus, as one called to be a mourner in their midst, Ezekiel's aim was for them to lament over their situation before the events of 586 B.C. In the event that they had adopted such a posture, not even mournful pleas and petitions by Ezekiel

could reverse Yahweh's decision, one secured by the scroll. It was a time to mourn, not to hope for Jerusalem's protection.

The death of Ezekiel's wife (referring to Jerusalem's fall), and the associated symbolism of donning festive garments at a time of grief, was a sign intended to create anticipation among the exiles (Ezek 24:15–18). Although the old has passed away (Ezekiel's wife), and will pass away (Jerusalem's upcoming fall), a new kind of relationship should be anticipated. But the exiles' capacity to understand was veiled; "will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus" (Ezek 24:19)? Likewise, Yahweh's confrontation with Israel's neighbors was another sign that mourning would end (Ezek 25–32). Yahweh's actions against these nations who made Israel's grief worse was meant to provide Israel with the necessary comfort. Then when the fugitive brought word that Jerusalem had fallen, mourning officially was to end (Ezek 33:21–22). Life could return to normal for Ezekiel and the exilic community. Restoration was now possible. Out of death comes life.

The sequence of events in the book moves from death to life (Ezek 33–48). It is a time for Israel to rejoice because Yahweh had a change of heart: He was providing new and faithful leadership, restoring Israel to life. The vision in Ezek 37:1–14 is remarkable. Graves will be opened and slain people will be resurrected to life in the land. The passage is filled with language of death and the grave as if the exiles in Babylon had physically died. But it refers to being raised from Babylon. Indeed, it is a time to rejoice because Yahweh was doing the following: destroying the enemy from abroad, rebuilding his sanctuary, and dwelling once again in a new temple, in a new city, and with a new, purified people.

Thus, Ezekiel's main point is bolstered against the matrix of a lament. Furthermore, the placement of the oracles against the nations has a specific function unique to Ezekiel. The larger unit on restoration is linked to something more than just divine abandonment. Both the abandonment and return of Yahweh to his earthly shrine are anchored in the city lament framework. The city lament matrix becomes a logical literary means to illustrate Ezekiel's point, one not insignificant for the exilic community.

The lament matrix also aids Ezekiel's portrayal in the book. By eating the scroll, Ezekiel became a mourner. By becoming a mourner Ezekiel is doing what he does best. He is role playing. This reading of Ezekiel, the person, accords well with other "performances" Yahweh requires of him. Ezekiel is 'enacting mourning,' as it were, for the death of the community since the community deserves the judgment of death through its sin (cf. Ezra 9:3–4). His overall portrayal as a mourner typifies anyone responding to the tragic news of death.

In sum, through his obedience Ezekiel becomes a mourner by eating the scroll. He subsequently displays an attitude of a mourner. Ezekiel internalizes what would have been loud weeping (Ezek 3:2–3); he sits (Ezek 3:15),

is silenced for a seven-day time period in anticipation of impending disaster (Ezek 3:15). After sitting in stunned silence for seven days, he is sentenced to house confinement and speechlessness, an extended mourning period imposed on him by Yahweh that lasts until the city falls (Ezek 3:24–25, 26). He is then asked to cut the hair of his beard and head as further indication that he is in mourning (Ezek 5:1). Yahweh commands him to make mourning gestures in response to the evil abominations of the house of Israel (Ezek 6:11). On two occasions he makes voluntary supplications asking Yahweh to spare what remains of Israel, and in so doing utilizes words associated with grief and mourning (Ezek 9:8–10; 11:13). He mourns for Jerusalem's princes (Ezek 19). He mourns for the city of Jerusalem by striking his thigh, and mourns inwardly when his wife dies (Ezek 21:17; 24:17). His mourning role for Israel ends when he is able to speak again at the news of Jerusalem's fall.

Understanding Ezekiel's role as a mourner not only adds to his multifaceted portrayal in the book, it also informs it. If his role represents a reflex of the city goddess, then the close association he has with his people (as watchman, sign, funeral director, and married exile) makes more sense. Lastly, a prophet who is speechless, house confined and besieged, unique as these all are, are not as difficult to grasp under the lament rubric. These multifaceted aspects of Ezekiel the person are better understood within the lament matrix.

Thus in general terms, the book reflects the thought world of its day, one that included certain ways of construing concepts such as the destruction of a city due to the deity's abandonment. The Israelite aspect of that thought world is reflected in the book's claim that the abandonment was due to the sin of the people. The Babylonian aspect of that thought world is reflected in the book's lament or lament-like motifs. These motifs can be seen quite clearly when compared with the city lament literature which I have highlighted. Thus, awareness of this literary model from the ancient Near East with its likely derivation (or partial transformation) from funeral laments enhances our overall understanding of both the prophet and the book bearing his name.

APPENDIX 1

The following citation from the NL is a sample *kirugu* illustrating the nature of the laments. The poet paints a pitiful picture of what has befallen the city. First, he shows how the city's shrines have been demolished. This demolition then brings ruination to the popular happy feasts and festivals. Sadly, the city sits in silence, stunned by the events, and instead of making a joyful noise, its musicians can only produce bitter wailings:[748]

1. After the cattle-pen had been built for the foremost rituals—
2. How did it become haunted? When will it be restored?
3. (Where) once the brick of fate had been laid—
4. Who scattered its rituals? The lamentation is reprised:
5. The *storeroom* of Nippur, Shrine Duranki,
6. How did it become hauntred? When will it be restored?
7. After the Kpur the cult-place, had been built,
8. After the brickwork of Ekur had been built,
9. After Ubšuʾukkna had been built,
10. After shrine Egalmah had been built—
11. How did they become haunted? When will they be restored?
12. How did the true city become empty?
13. Its precious designs have been defiled!
14. How were the city's festivals neglected?
15. Its magnificent rites have been overturned!
16. In the heart of Nippur, where the rituals (were) allotted
17. And the black-headed people prolifically multiplied,
18. The city's heart no (longer) revealed any (sign of) intelligence;
19. (Where) the Anunna used to give advice!
20. In Ubšuʾukkna, the place for making great judgements,
21. They no (longer) impart decisions or justice!
22. (In Nippur) where its gods had established dwellings,
23. Their daily rations offered, their daises erected,
24. (Where) the sacred *royal offering place* (and) the evening meal in their great banquet hall
25. Were destined for the pouring out of liquor and syrup,
26. (In) Nippur, the city where the black-headed
27. people used to cool themselves in its spreading shade,
28. In their dwellings (Enlil) felled (them) like criminals.
29. He himself scattered (them) about like scattered cattle.

[748] The citation follows Tinney's translation (Tinney, *Nippur*, 97–99).

30. The inner city, whose bitter tears (were) overwhelming,
31. How long until its lady, the goddess (Ninlil) would ask after it?
32. That great temple whose noise (of activity) was famous,
33. As though it were empty wasteland no one enters it (now).
34. As for Nippur, the city where all the great rulers increased (its wealth)—why did they disappear?
35. Where the black-headed peole ate rich grass like sheep,
36. Until what day would (Enlil) neglect (it)? In tears, lamentation, depression and despair—
37. How long would (his) spirit burn (with anger) without being appeased at it?
38. Those who once played the šem-drum and ala-drum,
39. Why were they whiling away the time in bitter lamenting?
40. Why were the lamenters sitting on its brickwork?
41. They were bewailing the hardship which beset them.
42. The men whose wives had fallen, whose children had fallen,
43. Were intoning "Oh! Our destroyed city!"
44. Their city gone, their dwellings taken away,
45. Because of those who were singing to the brickwork of the good city,
46. Because of the wailing of their lamenters,
47. Like the foster-childrens of an ecstatic, unaware of their (own) intelligence,
48. [(That) people] was smitten, its mind thrown into disorder.
49. 'The true temple] wails bitter.
50. *kirugu* 1

APPENDIX 2

The following is a sample *eršemma* whereby the poet shows Enlil as the one bearing sole responsibility for Nippur's demise. Not even the wailing of Ninlil, Enlil's spouse, can turn back his destructive word:[749]

The fowler has spread the net over the base of his mountain.
The honored one, the lord of the lands,
the lord of the lands whose thoughts are unfathomable,
whose word is true,
whose orders no one can challenge,
Enlil, whose utterances are unalterable,
Has spread the net over his house, over Nippur.
He has spread the net over the brickwork of the Ekur.
He has spread the net over the kiur, the great place.
He has spread the net over the shrine Enamtila.
He has spread the net over the brickwork of Sippar.
He has spread the net over the shrine Ebabbar.
He has spread the net over the brickwork of Tintir.
He has spread the net over the brickwork of the Esagil.
He has spread the net over the brickwork of Borsippa.
He has spread the net over the brickwork of the Ezida.
He has spread the net over the Emahtila.
He has spread the net over the Etemenanki.
He has spread the net over the Edaranna.
What does the lord have in his heart?
What does he have in mind?
What does he have in his pure mind?
He has destroyed the land.
He has poured the waters of destruction into the canals.
He has caused…plants to sprout in the steppe.
He has placed the black-headed people in the steppe like (scattered) seeds.
His wife strikes up a cry to him; she utters a wail to him.
Enlil's wife, Ninlil (utters a wail to him).
His older sister, the lady of the Emah (utters a wail to him).
Holy Ninnibru utters a wail to him.
Fowler, when you stoop over, what (is able) to move about?

[749] M. Cohen, *Sumerian Hymnology: The Eršema*, HUCAS no. 2 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1981), 127–129.

Enlil, when you stoop over the land, what (is able) to move about?
Lord whose word it true, when you stoop over, what (is able) to
Move about? You roiled the waters and caught the fish.
You laid out a net and captured the flocks
35. the faithful house has been destroyed; the faithful people were heaped up
Father Enlil, your eye never tires. When will you grow weary?
[…]…
[…]… (*eršemma* no. 160)

APPENDIX 3

The following is a sample *balag* entitled *The Raging Sea.* It commences with the groans of the people and is followed with praises to Enlil's powerful name and continues with shouts of exaltations in recognition of Enlil's sovereignty. The *balag* ends with entreaties from the suffering people asking how long they will continue to suffer:[750]

[The raging sea will not be calmed. …]
(beginning of the composition not preserved)
= =
A lament, woe! A lament, woe! If I could only hold back the sighs!
Lord of my city, great mountain, Enlil, a lament, woe!
Lord of my city, great mountain, lord [of the lands], a lament, woe!
In the steppe a wail! Its young man is sobbing.
Its young man shakes at the wail.
Its young woman shakes at the wail.
= =
Wild ox, honored one, wild ox, when your name is against the lands,
a+10 great mountain, father Enlil, wild ox, when your name is against the lands,
shepherd of the blackheaded, wild ox, when your name is against the land
when your name is in the land,
when it is in the land of Elam,
when it is to the very horizon of heaven,
when it is to the edge of the earth!
= =
You are exalted! You are exalted!
Enlil, you are exalted!
Enlil, in (all) the lands you are exalted!
Shepherd of the black-headed, you are exalted!
a+20 You place your neck in (your) lap. You are exalted!
(You) take counsel in your own heart! You are exalted!
From its throat (even) the bird pours out "Woe!"
From its throat (even) the girgilu-bird pours out "Woe!"
when he who has turned away from the nation
among his black-headed causes necks to droop (sadly) over shoulders.

[750] The translation follows that of M. Cohen, *CLAM*, 381–382.

= =
Wild ox, honored one, wild ox, when your name is against the lands, great mountain, father Enlil, wild ox, when your name is against the lands, when your name is in the land,
a+30 when it is in the land of Elam,
when it is to the very horizon of heaven,
when it is to the edge of the earth!
= =
How long? How Long?
Enlil, how long?
Enlil, how long in the lands?
Shepherd of the black-headed, how long?
In their very midst, the crow …
At the word of Enlil, the crow …
The honored one who has scattered men from the nation.
a+40 Father Enlil, has caused the black-headed to be carried off.
= =
Wild ox, honored one, wild ox, when your name is against the lands, great mountain, father Enlil, wild ox, when your name is against the lands, when your name is in the land,
when it is in the land of Elam,
when it is to the very horizon of heaven,
when it is to the edge of the earth!
= =
Change (your) mind! Change (your) mind!
Enlil, change (your) mind!
a+50 Enlil in the land change (your) mind!
Shepherd of the black-headed, change (your) mind!
Change (your) mind! Change it! Speak to him!
Heart be calm! Be Calm! Speak to him!
= =
The bull is at rest. When will he rise up?
Enlil is at rest. When will he rise up?
In Nippur, at the Duranki, when will he rise up?
In Nippur, at the place the fates are decided, when will he rise up?
At that house, set up as the life of the nation when will he rise up?
= =
a+60 Let the resting bull arise!

Let resting Enlil arise!
Let the resting bison arise!
(From among) the fattened oxen with the bent legs let him arise!
From among the good … of the gadalallu-priests let him arise!
From among the meal fed goats let him arise!
From among the fat-tailed, banded sheep let him arise!
= =
The rising bull gazes about.
The rising Enlil gazes about.
In Nippur, at Duranki, he gazes about.
a+70 In Nippur, at that place where the fates are determined, he gazes about.
You are killing us! You are destroying us!
= =
The bull, when rising, scrapes the (very) heavens!

(break in the composition of a few lines)

…
Heaven cannot bear the word of the lord.
Heaven [and earth] cannot bear the word of Enlil.
Heaven [and earth] cannot bear just one hand of the lord.
Earth cannot bear just one foot of Enlil.
= =
His fate! A wail! A wail! … A wail! A wail!
The fate of great An! A wail! A wail!
a+80 The fate of great Enlil! A wail! A wail!
The lofty fate of the Ekur! A wail! A wail!
His fate which causes the heavens to tremble! A wail! A wail!
His fate which is as beautiful as the earth! A wail! A wail!
His word is the wail of the nation, the life of the lands.
The word of the great An is the wail of the nation the life of the lands.The word of Enlil is the wail of the nation, the life of the lands.The word [of the lord] afflicts the young man with woe; the young man moans. His word afflicts the young woman with woe; the young woman moans.
= =

(The following translation of the last *kirugu* preserved in text A is extremely tentative due to the nature of the text).

I shall go …
For Enlil I shall … at (my) feet.
(For my) father, (my) …
I shall … at my hands.
…
I shall go. (For) Enlil.
I shall … his feet.
I shall sit at his feet.
…
I shall … his …
I shall …
sleeps a false sleep.
(*balag* 16)

APPENDIX 4

The Hymn Šulgi R[751]
The Commissioning of the Boat's Construction

1. Oh barge, Enki assigned the quay of abundance to you as your fate.
2. Father Enlil looked at you with approval.
3. Your lady, Ninlil, commanded your construction.
4. She ordered the faithful provider, king Šulgi, the shepherd.
5. He of broad intelligence conceived the great plan.
6. He will not rest day and night.
7. He, the wise one, who is proficienet in planning, he, the omniscient
8. Will fell large cedars in the huge forest for you.
9. He will make you perfect and make you breathtaking to behold.

The Parts of the Boat

10. Your woven … is …
11. Your covering reed-mats are the daylight spreading wide over the holy settlements.
12. Your timbers are hissing snakes crouching on their paws.
13. Your punting poles are dragons sleeping a sweet sleep in their lair.
14. Your strakes are … snakes, …
15. Your floor-planks are flood-currents, sparkling altogether in the pure Euphrates.
16. Your side-planks are fastened into their fixed places with wooden rings.
17. You are a stairway leading to a mountain spring, a … filled with … .
18. Your holy … are (well) established and firmly founded abundance.
19. Your bench is a lofty dais erected in the midst of the abzu.
20. Your … is Aratta, full-laden with treasures.
21. Your door, facing the sunrise, is a … bird,
22. Carrying a … in its talons while spreading wide its wings.
23. Your glittering golden sun-disc is fastened with leather straps

[751] The translation given here comes from the website: http://www.etcsl.orient.ex.ac.uk/ 2.4.4.18 Šulgi and Ninlil's barge (Šulgi R).

24. (Your) moon disk shines brightly upon all the lands.
25. Your banner, adorned with the divine powers of kingship, is a woodland of well watered cypress trees (providing) a pleasant shade.
26. Your small reed mats are the twilight sky with stars coming out, inspiring awe …
27. In the midst of your carefully tended small gizi reeds with numerous twigs.
28. Flocks of little birds twitter as they might in a resplendent swamp.
29. Their chirping, as pleasant to the heart as the sound of the churn's slipslosh,
30. For Enlil and Ninlil he established them like … .
31. Your rudder is a large kin fish at the mouth of the Kisala canal.
32. Your … are a bison, inspiring terror on a socle.
33. Your tow-rope is the gliding (snake god Nirah extended over the land.
34. Your mooring pole is the heavenly bond, which … .
35. Your longside beams are a warrior striking straight against another warrior.
36. Your prow is the god Nanna … fair sky.
37. Your stern is the god Utu … at the horizon.
38. Your canopy (?) is …
39. Sa-gida.
40. The holy festival and the great rituals.
41. The faithful shepherd Šulgi established,
42. The great gods bathe in holy water in Nibru.
43. He assigns the fates to their places in the city and allocates the right divine powers.
44. The mother of the Land, Ninlil the fair, comes out (?) from the house,
45. Enlil embraces her like a pure wild cow.
46. They take their seats on the barge's holy dais, and provisions are lavishly prepared.
47. The lofty barge …, the ornament of the Tigris,
48. Enters the rolling river; … on the shining water.
49. The ritually washed five-headed mace, mitum mace, lance and standard … at the bow.
50. Enlil's warrior, Ninurta, goes at their front,
51. He directs the … of your wide ferry-boat straight.
52. He … the holy punting pole of the barge, the holy raft.
53. The ferry men … holy songs;
54. They … the great exaltedness of the lady.

55. The good woman, Ninlil, … joyfully with Šulgi
56. Sumer and Urim … joy and happiness.
57. The barge bobs at the quay "Ornament of the Waves."
58. It sails off into the reed-beds of Enlil's Tummal.
59. Like a goring ox, it raises, then lowers its head.
60. It strikes its breast against the rising waves; it stirs up the encircling waters.
61. When it thrusts within the waters, the fishes of the subterranean waters become frightened;
62. As it glides (?) upon them, it makes the waters sparkle luxuriantly.
63. … the holy raft; … the lady of Tummal … prayer. Enlil's ancestors and
64. An the king, the god who determines the fates, greets her.
65. With Ninlil, they take their seats at the banquet.
66. They pass the day in abundance, they give praise throughout night.
67. They decree a fate, an allotted fate to be pre-eminent forever,
68. For the king who fitted out the holy barge.
69. Then light shines up at the edge of the Land as Utu rises refulgently.
70. As the barge is traveling upstream, it … radiates (?) and creaks (?) …
71. In the Ninmutu, the canal of the year of abundance …
72. As the carp make their bellies (?) sparkle, Enlil rejoices.
73. As the mulu fish play noisily there, Ninlil rejoices.
74. As the … fish …, Enki rejoices.
75. As the suhurmaš fish dart about, Nanna rejoices.
76. The Anuna gods rejoice at …
77. … lifts its head in the Euphrates.
78. In the midst of … ever-flowing water is carried.
79. In joyous Nippur, he moors the holy barge at the quay.
80. Ninlil upon king Šulgi
81. Looks with joyful eyes and shining forehead.
82. "Shepherd …, Šulgi, who has a lasting name, king of jubilation!
83. I will prolong the nights of the crown that was placed upon yourhead by holy An,
84. I will extend the days of the holy scepter that was given to you by Enlil.
85. May the foundation of your throne that was bestowed on you by Enki be firm!

86. May Nanna, the robust calf, the seed of Enlil, to whom I gave birth,
87. Shepherd who brings about perfection,
88. Cover your life with … which is full of exuberance as if it were my holy ma garment!"
89. Sag-gara.

2A. The Construction of Enki's Cult Boat in Eridu[752]

1. […]
2. […]
3. […]
4. Boat, [destined for the shining] quay,
5. Boat of Enki, [destined] for the shining quay

The Parts of the Boat

6. Its ree[d] is imported from Magan
7. The boat – its reed [is imported from Magan],
8. Its bitumen [is provided by the abzu],
9. Its all-covering reed mats are […
10. Its floor-planks are [made] of lapis-[lazuli],
11. [Its oars] are […
12. [Its ….] are
13. Its cabin is a fir-tree, inspiring [terror like a …
14. Its punting-pole, [made of] gold, is [….]
15. Its rudder [has been brought] down from Meluhhla,
16. Its gisal-oars, seven times seven, are lions of the plain, crouching on their paws,
17. Its anchor, erected in (its) center, is a rope, reaching into heaven,
18. The boat – its walls are cedars from their forest,
19. The boat's canopy are date-palms of Dilmun.

The Various Gods of Enki's Circle Enjoy the Boat

20. The master planner, he of prosperity,
21. Spends the day joyfully in its midst …
22. The boat – it has been blessed by Enki,

[752] The Sumerian text is known from tablet copy from Kuyunjik from the Neo-Assyrian period, specifically from the library of king Aššur-bani-pal. It was published in copy in IV R 25. The translation is from J. Klein, "Šulgi and Išme-Dagan: Originality and Dependence in Sumerian Royal Hymnology," in J. Klein and A. Skaist (eds.), *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology Dedicated to Pinhas Artzi*, Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990, 91–96.

23. It has been taken care of by Damgalnunna,
24. (And) given a good name by Asarluhim
25. Sirsir the (divine) sailor of Eridu,
26. (And) Ninildu, the chief carpenter of heaven,
27. Constructed it carefully with their holy hands.
28. Oh boat, may prosperity walk before you!
29. Oh boat, may abundance walk behind you!
30. May your heart be filled with joy!

2B i The Praise of Enki's Cult Boat in Enki and the World Order

106. In my abzu, sacred hymns and incantations resound for me (in the sea midst).
107. My magur-boat, "The-Crown-the-Ibex-of-the-Deep."
108. In its midst brought great joy to me.
109. In the lofty marshland, the place, which I have chosen in (my) heart.
110. It sails for me there, it thrives for me there.
111. The stroke-callers make the oars to be drawn in unison.
112. They sing for me sweet songs, They cause the river to rejoice,
113. Nimgirsig, the captain of my magur-boat,
114. Hold the golden scepter for me,
115. For me, Enki, he commands the boat, "The-Ibex-of-the-Deep."

2B ii The Various Lands With Which the Boats of Enki Trade

124. Let the lands of Meluhha, Magan and Dilmun
125. Look upon me, upon Enki.
126. Let the Dilmun boats be loaded with timber.
127. Let the Magan boats beloaded sky-high.
128. Let the *magilum* boats of Meluhha
129. Transport gold and silver and bring them
130. To Nippur for Enlil, king of all the lands."

APPENDIX 5

The Oracle Concerning the Ship of Tyre: Ezekiel 27:1–25

1. The word of the Lord came to me:
2. "Now you, son of man, raise a lamentation over Tyre,
3. and say to Tyre, who dwells at the entrance to the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, thus says the Lord God:

"O Tyre, you have said:

I am perfect in beauty!

The Parts of the Ship

4. Your borders are in the heart of the seas; your builders made perfect your beauty.
5. They made all your planks of fir trees from Sēnĭr; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you.
6. Of oaks of Bāshan they made your oars; they made your deck of pines from the coasts of Cyprus, inlaid with ivory.
7. Of fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail, serving as your ensign; blue and purple from the coasts of Elīshah was your awning.
8. The inhabitants of Sīdon and Arvăd were your rowers; skilled men of Zĕmer were in you, they were your pilots.
9. The elders of Gēbal and her skilled men were in you, caulking your seams; All the ships of the sea with their mariners were in you, to barter for your wares.
10. Perisa and Lud and Put were in your army as your men of war; they hung the shield and helmet in you; they gave you splendor.
11. The men of Arvăd and Hēlech were upon your walls round about, and men of Gāmăd were in your towers; they hung their shields upon your walls round about; they made perfect your beauty.

The Lands With Which the Ship Trades

12. Tarshĭsh trafficked with you because of your great wealth of every kind; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares.

13. Jāvan, Tubal, and Měshěch traded with you; they exchanged the persons of men and vessels of bronze for your merchandise.
14. Běth-togarmah exchanged for your wares horses, war horses, and mules.
15. The men of Rhodes traded with you; many coastlands were your own special markets, they brought you in payment ivory tusks and ebony.
16. Ēdom trafficked with you because of your abundant goods; they exchanged for your wares emeralds, purple, embroidered work, fine lines, coral, and agate.
17. Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat, olives and early figs, honey, oil, and balm.
18. Damascus trafficked with you for your abundant goods, because of your great wealth of every kind; wine of Hělbon, and white wool,
19. And wine from Ūzal they exchanged for your wares; wrought iron, cassia, and Calamus were bartered for your merchandise.
20. Dēdan traded with you in saddlecloths for riding.
21. Arabia and all the princes of Kēdar were your favored dealers in lambs, rams, and goats; in these they trafficked with.
22. The traders of Shēba and Raamah traded with you; they exchanged for your wares the best of all kinds of spices, and all precious stones, and gold.
23. Hāran, Cănneh, Eden, Asshur, and Chĭlmad traded with you.
24. These traded with you in choice garments, in clothes of blue and embroidered work, and in carpets of colored stuff, bound with cords and made secure; in these they traded with you.
25. The ships of Tarshĭsh traveled for you with your merchandise. So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas.

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Summary

This study is a comparison of the book of Ezekiel with the well-known city lament genre of ancient Mesopotamia. Nine shared features are analyzed and explained. These features derive from the work of F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp and his comparison of biblical Lamentations with city laments of Mesopotamia. This material provides a fruitful point of comparison, one that is more than coincidental given Ezekiel's geographical location in Nippur (the provenience of one of the five historical city laments). Compelling comparative evidence reveals that the lament genre is reflected in the book of Ezekiel and was used as a matrix for its compilation. Ezekiel's usage of the city lament genre is, perhaps, the key to understanding the organizational structure of much of the book along with its various themes.